BUSH HOMESTEAD GIRL

By

William Wilder McKinley Parker, I.A.I.

11223 - 76 Avenue, Edmonton, Alberta, Canada

Telephone 439-0939

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BUSH HOMESTEAD GIRL

or Myrtle's Blueberry Kiss

By

Wm. W. McK. Parker

11223 - 76 Avenue, Edmonton, Alberta

Author of . . .

PANSIE PIE AND OTHER POEMS
RHYMES FROM THE NORTHWEST
SILVER FORKS
FLOWING GOLD
UNCLE JAY OF PIONEER DAY
GREENER PRAIRIE
ROVERS THREE

THE AUTHOR

The author of this novel, Bush Homestead Girl, Wm. W. McK. Parker, was an Alberta pioneer, who homesteaded in 1914 fifty miles northwest of Edmonton near the Alaska highway. A versatile teacher and poet, he was for five years principal of high schools in the north. His Peace River school won first prize three years straight for its magazine in creative writing contest. He published education-games and his first Alberta song in the twenties. During the past twenty years he taught high school art, shop and literature; his last position held was in the St. Nicholas new high school in Edmonton. Recently he has produced and published five prose and a third poetry book, which have a wide circulation, even many sales being made in foreign countries. In 1943 while attending the Banff School of Fine Arts on a Rockefeller Foundation scholarship, he organized the Alberta Schools Creative Writing competition. His students have been the winners of many prizes and scholarship honors in educational competition and have won distinction in festivals, fairs and academic work.

In 1912 he dined with Lord Baden Powell at a Boy Scout Leaders' banquet in Chicago. Mr. and Mrs. Parker are the parents of two girls and three boys, two of whom are now engineers and one a radar electrical technician in the Canadian navy. The Parkers are well known in the Metropolitan United Church, of which they are members and have resided at 11223 76 Ave., Edmonton for more than sixteen years, where Mr. Parker also has his art studio and handicraft laboratories.

Boat Rower

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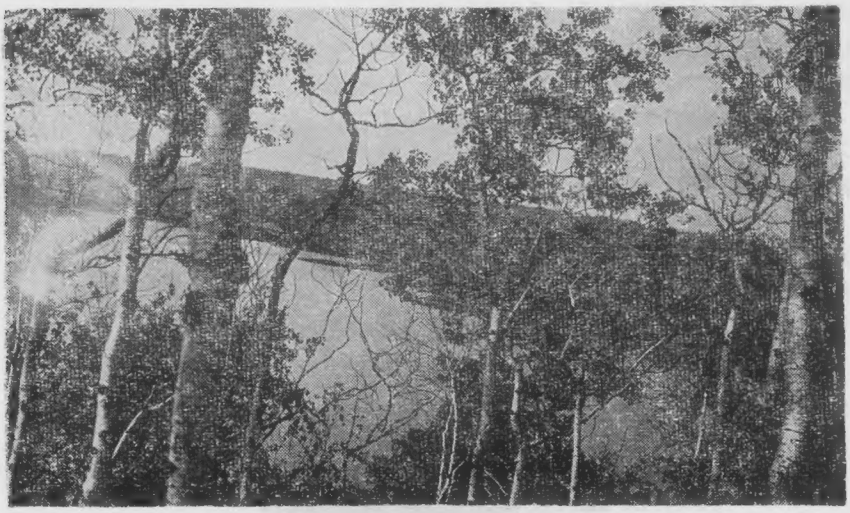


An Alberta Lake

GOD'S GOLD

From

Pansy Pie and Other Poems
(third book of poems)

By

Wm. W. McKinley Parker

At sunset Edmonton with golden sky,
The leaves a-tremble, gentle Autumn breeze,
And bird-calls wafting through the hillside nigh!
The streets flash golden windows, and golden trees
Upstretch to Heaven's painted rim so high,
Amid a prairie heath, bedecked by seas
Of golden wheat, by yellow roofs and gold
The oil refineries, slim spires and tall,
Reflecting "black gold" crests like shields of old
Across the valley; Edmonton in Fall
When goldenrod's in bloom and marigolds,
'Neath clouds of honey-gold spread over all,
And there the river of gold, the golden West
Divides, while sunset fades in dusk to rest.

April 3, 1964,
Edmonton, Alberta

Dear Mr. Parker,

I have read and enjoyed very much your new book, "Bush Homestead Girl." It preserves for us the spirit of early days, fifty years ago, when families faced all the difficulties of settling in a new land, not just hard work but heroism, and yet there was great satisfaction in their lives. There were joys of helping one another, in singing together and other you have indicated so well. This is a beautiful love story of historical value; the book is a job well done.

Sincerely yours,

(Rev. Dr.) W. T. Young,
(Metropolitan United Church)

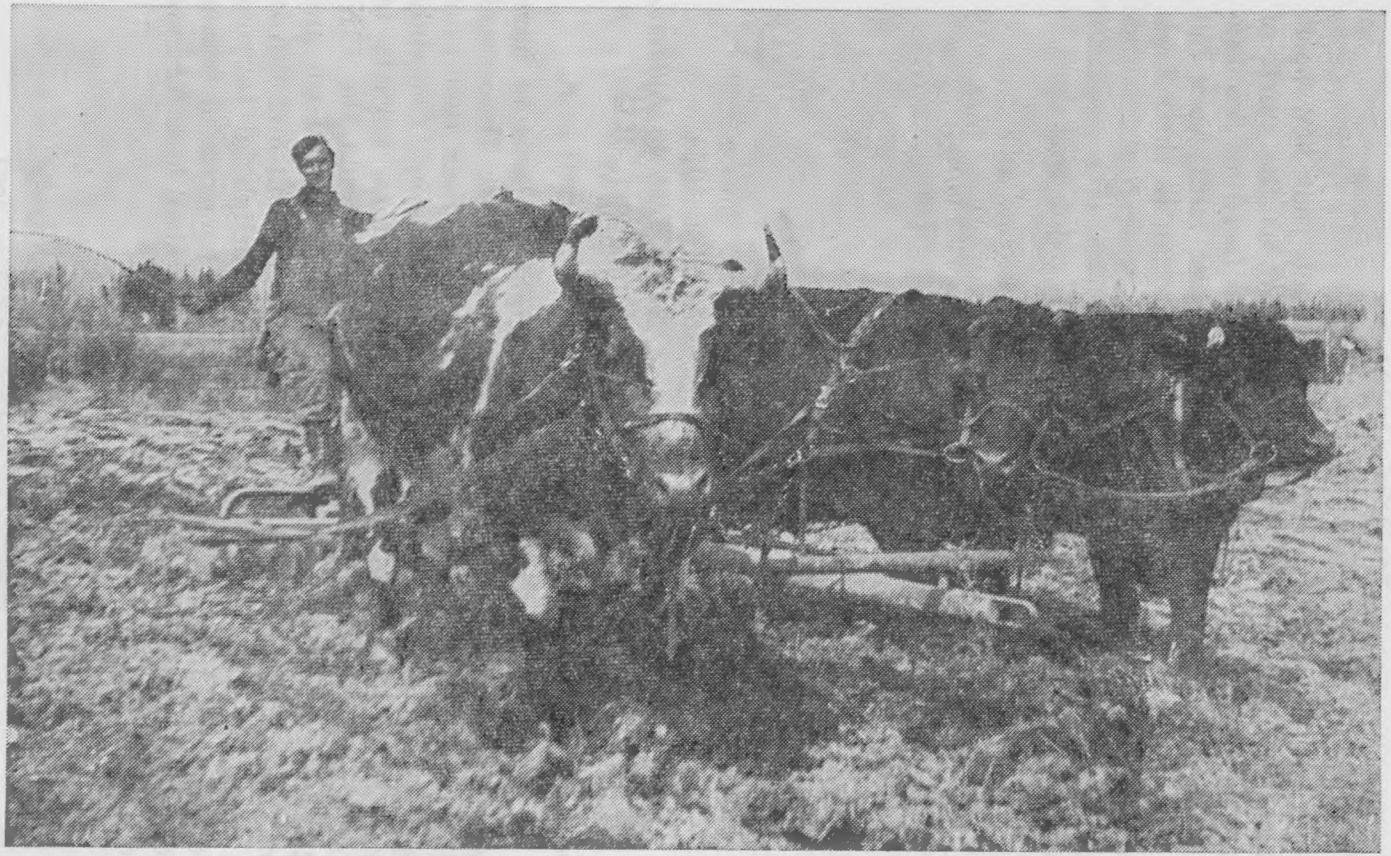
April 3, 1964
2130 West 43 Avenue,
Vancouver, B.C.

Dear Mr. Parker,

I just cannot tell you how delighted I was to have your letter and learn of your new book, "Bush Homestead Girl," and indeed, I am even more happy to hear that your books are being considered for moving pictures. Certainly with bush fires, floods, Indians, rival suitors, hornets in hay, tussles with wild animals, helping to build the C.N. Railway, work with oxen teams, logging in pine bush and building of log homes, there is much excitement and fun in a book of this kind. It should prove delightful to your readers and I congratulate you. I shall be grateful indeed to have a copy of any books you write. I shall look forward to hearing if any book is used for movies.

Yours sincerely,

(Dr.) Donalda Dickie
(Author and Teacher)



LAC STE. ANNE TRAIL

"In sunny Alberta where the rainfall is ample every day."

"That's right, Nellie! But it hasn't rained today."

"Yes, Herman, it hasn't yet."

"I hope those clouds stay away, Nellie, today!"

"Yes, yes, clouds stay away, come some other day!"

Nellie meant this rhyme very much as she sang it, for it had rained heavy showers two days, making the ruts in the trail deep in mud and puddles of water in low spots.

"Perhaps we should have stayed in Stony Plain, Nellie."

"No, Herman, but we could be dryer even in a leaky tent."

"That's true, Nell, our covered wagon is dry but we are wading in creeks or mud, either one."

"Or dodging showers, not small drops but pails full."

Just then the wagon wheel struck a bad rut on the left, which was Nellie's side, and she slid off to the damp ground. "Whoa!" called Herman to the oxen. Tom and Charlie gladly stopped, relishing a pause in work any time.

"Good thing that this wasn't at a creek crossing or a bad mud hole!" exclaimed Nell, scrambling to her feet. Herman smiled, then helped her in again.

"Luckily it was not," agreed her husband, as she got into the wagon again and sat down beside him.

"Giddap!" called Herman. "Giddap!"

The wagon started; the wheels rolled over a big rock in the trail rut and dropped into another chuck hole like the first one; Nellie slid from the wagon seat again to the ground.

"Whoa!" yelled Herman this time. "Whoa!"

"Whoop!" uttered Nell as she went.

"I think I'll have to tie you in, Nell."

"At least, I'll hold on tight from now until we get home."

They bumped along the rough trail through the Cree

Indian reserve north of Lac Ste. Anne Narrows all afternoon.

"How far is it across the reserve?"

"Six or seven miles, I think, Nellie."

"It seems like sixteen!" She added, "Ruts and creeks!"

"Sixteen or sixty, I'm getting hungry. It must be nearly supper time." Herman looked into the wagon, so did Nellie.

"Josephine must be tired, she is still asleep," said Herman.

"I can't see how she can sleep on this road. I'll walk a bit, I can't stand any more bumps today."

"All right, girl, try it if you like."

She did, but it was for a short distance only, as around the bend of the trail the road crossed a wet meadow. So Nellie got in.

"Is riding any better now?" she asked.

"No, just about as rough as it can be, but it is dry in the wagon. Try not to fall out here." And Herman grinned.

"How do the oxen follow the trail here? I can see no track."

"They feel the trail with their feet," replied Herman.

"What big trees along here! No one could make a farm out of land with trees as large as these, could he?"

"Oh, yes, and trees make lumber, you know."

"Oh, Herman! If, . . . if, . . . if, ..."

"If what? Cheer up, it has not rained today yet."

"Hasn't it? Not yet."

"But it might soon. So I think we should stop and make our supper now. I'm glad this is not a desert."

"But what must I do with these mosquitoes? I'll make a smudge."

Herman swung the oxen off the trail. "Gee!" he cried. "Wo!" Here was a dry, grassy knoll near a creek. He removed the oxen collars and soon released them for the night with a friendly pat that told the animals they were free to graze as they wished.

While her husband was unhitching the team, Nellie engaged herself in the task of getting a smudge going near the wagon.

"There, that ought to rid us of these pests," she com-

plimented her work when a curl of smoke rose from the mass of leaves.

A six year old girl climbed out of the back of the covered wagon at that moment. "Hello, Mom!" she said a bit sleepily.

"Josephine, will you please try to keep our smudge burning?"

"Oh, yes, Mamma!" was the cheerful answer. "What are we going to have for supper? Where are we, Mamma?"

"I don't know, Josephine. But we won't enjoy it much unless we drive these mosquitoes away. Watch the smudge, please."

Herman brought a pail of water from the creek near at hand and got together more wood and down timber for night fires.

"I think we'll all feel better when we get a pot of tea made," said Herman, as he put a little pail of water over the fire. "Supper fire is ready, Nellie," he said.

"I agree with that, Herman," responded Nellie. And she set about hurriedly preparing their campfire meal. Tea was made presently and the food made ready. "Come to supper, folks!" she called cheerfully very soon.

"You are used to camping and meals on the wilderness trail now, Nellie, making meals quickly," said Herman thankfully.

"How do you know we are on the right trail? she asked Herman, as they sat down.

"There isn't much chance of getting off it. This trail is the only one, I believe. It is an old Indian hunting and fishing road between Lac Ste. Anne and Lac La Nonne."

"Right through popular bush! Some trail!"

"Yes, Nell, some road!" and he poured them some cups of hot tea from the pail he had taken from the fire. "The mosquitoes have moved off, Nellie." He laughed.

"Yes, daddy, our smudge and supper fire have chased them away."

"Long day and no rain, Herman," said Nellie.

"We are lucky, eh?" he declared.

"How much farther is it?" she asked.

"Perhaps six or seven miles," replied Herman.

"When the railway is built I think it will be just four miles to the town or station," continued her husband.

"Well, it was a day and half from Stony Plain to Onoway, then a day and half to Lac Ste. Anne, and a day and a half to our bush homestead," and with that she poured some more tea.

"On-oway seems well named, it is on the way," said Herman.

"What will the new station be called when there is a railway?"

"Glenevis. I think it means a pretty glen in Scotland."

"I hope there are some pine trees."

"Oh, yes, there are, enough for lots of good lumber."

"The poplar will make lumber too, won't it?"

"Yes, it will. Poplar is thinner than pine, and crooked."

"Daddy, will you make me a swing under a tree?"

"Yes, Josephine, when we get to our place."

Nellie was singing as she cleared things away after their evening repast. "Come down north and see sunlight dancing on the lake, see the tumbling water of a river or a fall, see the sparkling diamonds upon the snow." She made herself a song and seemed happy as she prepared for the night. First she combed Josephine's hair and then she brushed her own.

Herman piled more wood upon their fire and they sat within the warmth of it, as it grew more chilly, for you should know nights in the North are cool even in summer. It was not yet dark this long, enjoyable, summer evening. Later the oxen edged in closer to the campfire to free themselves from mosquitoes. They contentedly chewed their cuds.

Finally the little trio of new homeseekers made a bed in their wagon for the night. The father got a pan of water from the creek and they washed their faces and hands before retiring. With a kiss for her mother and one for her father, Josephine crept up on her father's lap and said her prayer. Then with her arms around his neck she bade them both, "Goodnight." He then laid her in her blankets in the covered wagon.

A new day dawned bright and clear of clouds the following morning. After breakfast was over, Herman got

a can of ground oat chop from his wagon, sprinkled a bit of salt on it and gave it to his oxen, who were pleased. He then harnessed them for the last lap of the journey to the Sears' new homestead on a little Pembina creek.

"It's too early, Daddy, to start out on the trail to the wilderness," said Josephine, and she yawned sleepily.

"Come now, Josephine, get into the wagon," said Nellie.

"Yes, you can sleep some more in the back of the wagon," called Herman, who was hitching the oxen in their places.

"Come on now, Josephine, climb into the covered wagon," coaxed her mother, but the child had fallen asleep where she sat upon the ground. Her father lifted her in his arms.

"She'll be comfortable, riding there in the back."

"She didn't wake up when you laid her on the blankets, Herman?"

"No, Nellie, I think she sleeps too much!"

"I'll get her up in an hour or so," said her mother.

"Well, we should reach our place today, perhaps by noon."

"Oh, I do hope so," replied Nellie. "Will you start building a house at once when we get there?"

"I think that will be our first job."

"Good. Will you use logs or build with lumber?"

"Logs, Nellie, we'll use logs."

"What about a little garden? Shall we try to dig one?"

"We might, Nellie, get some potatoes planted this year."

"Nothing else?"

"Well, you could try a few other things, but it is late now."

"I will. I'll plant carrots, lettuce, beans and peas."

"Good luck! I hope these pay you for your work and trouble."

"Josephine and I shall look after the garden and it will grow."

"Well, we are out of the Indian reserve now."

"How do you know, Herman?"

"I can see Turner's clearing and his house. And here is the new railway grade to connect us with Edmonton."

"But there is no railway track on it."

"That will come soon with a few more settlers here."

"It will be wonderful to know it is coming. I'll listen to hear the first train whistle," said Nellie, with a thrill.

"We will all rejoice when we hear it."

"It must take work to clear some of this land of trees."

"Well, there are streaks that have been burnt over by fires."

"Like Turner's field, Herman?"

"I think it was not heavy clearing. But the quarter east of him is heavy bush. This trail now cuts through it."

"Are there any settlers between here and our place?"

"Yes, two; John Macleod and Tom Price. This Indian trail cuts through both places and none of the proper roads are made."

They passed through a half mile of bush. After this poplar they came to Macleod's log cabin.

"I think we should say hello, if he were home."

There was a man at the house door.

"I'll waken Josephine, Herman." Nellie climbed down stretching her limbs, and then awakening the girl.

"Hello, neighbor!" said Herman, and he shook hands with the man at the house. "My name is Herman Sears."

"Hello!" And this is your wife, Mrs. Sears?"

"And this is our little girl, Josephine," said Herman.

"Pleased to meet you both!" he said. "Have a good trip?"

"Good and rough! Any other new settlers this week?"

"James McCrea, an Irish schoolmaster from Belfast, Ireland; filed on the quarter, just this side of Tom Price's, with family."

"Good! The more the merrier. Then too, maybe a school."

"That will come soon with settlers taking land everywhere."

"It is just a little more than a mile to Tom Price's cabin."

"Then it is another mile to our place, Herman, is it not?"

"Yes, Nellie, if we keep going and it does not rain, we may be home before noon and lunch time."

"Let us go on, then," agreed Mrs. Sears.

So they urged the oxen on and they responded by walk-

ing at top speed. Tom was working out away from his cabin. So by about eleven o'clock their covered wagon arrived at the Pembina creek. Herman got out and inspected the corduroy or logs of the creek bridge, which seemed to be intact.

"How much farther is it? How far now, Daddy?" asked Josephine.

"Just a few rods, Josephine."

"Then we are to live near this creek in this valley."

"Yes, Nellie, it looks like a good valley, with good soil and good grass for hay. That tall pine and spruce northeast of this meadow is on our quarter, this hay meadow is Will's."

"Oh, it seems too good to be true that we are at the end of this journey, and that this will be our home."

"I'll unhitch the team just near the line at the west edge of our quarter," said Herman.

So after crossing the creek bridge, he pulled to the right form the Lac Ste. Anne trail. A few minutes more and the wagon came to a stop. The ox team were turned out to graze before noon that day. They were unhitched in what later became Nellie's chicken yard, which one year grew some of the finest potatoes and carrots. Here was water handy and here was also timber close at hand.

Here they unloaded their covered wagon and set up a tent. Near the tent they built a rough table and a place to cook. Weather held dry for a few days, so Herman commenced at once to cut logs for their home.

"Guess what we have done today, Daddy," said Josephine, the second evening, when supper was ready.

"I suppose Mamma has started teaching you things for school."

"No, not that! We were digging garden and planting it."

"How nice! And you helped, did you?"

"Yes, I planted seeds of all kinds, even flowers."

"But Daddy may plow some more land for garden when he can."

That evening another wagon, with a cow tied behind, came over the hill from the southwest, and presently bumped over the corduroy bridge over Pembina creek in the centre

of the valley. It turned off toward the Sears' tent and pulled to a halt.

"Hello!" came the shout from Will who drove the wagon.

"Hello! Hello! Hello!" were three answering shouts from the group at the supper table.

"What kept you so long?" asked Herman.

"My blame cow did not lead too well behind the wagon."

"We thought you would catch up to us any time," said Nellie.

"Mama and I planted some garden today, Uncle Will."

"Oh, so you did, Josephine! How lovely!"

"You brought us a cow. Now we can have milk!"

Will gave his sister and niece a hug and a kiss. "But I don't think milk will be good on a three day trip like this." He turned his team and cow loose.

"What news?" asked Herman.

"I nearly bought a grey saddle pony from the Indians at the Narrows of Lac Ste. Anne," replied Will.

"Oh, you did? You had enough with a cow tied behind."

"Yes, it was," declared Will.

"Come have some supper," invited Nellie.

"I have a couple sacks of vegetables in my wagon," said Will.

"I have cut nearly enough logs for a house," said Herman.

"Then we can start laying them up soon," offered Will.

"It sounds interesting, Herman, your logs for the house," agreed his wife, Nellie. "Living in a tent is fine if it does not rain often."

"Yes, we can skid them in any time now and start building tomorrow or the next day," promised Herman.

"Oh, Uncle Will, I had a swim in our creek this afternoon," exulted Josephine, "and it was fun!"

"Really! Is it deep enough? I would not mind a plunge in the creek, myself, declared Will.

"Neither would I!" added Herman. "Cutting house logs warms one up these summer days." And a little later the men did.

"The wild hay in my meadows is getting long, almost ready to cut in a week or two."

"Yes, that redtop in this first meadow is pretty tall, Will," agreed Herman. "And you'll want hay for the cow and team next winter."

"That we shall."

"Did you hear about some new settlers near us, Will?"

"No, Nellie, are there some new neighbors?"

"We heard that a school teacher, James McCrea, is just west of Tom Price," said his sister.

"That's interesting, Nellie, a teacher, a few more settlers and children, then we'll have a school!"

"It sounds easy, just as easy as you say, Will!"

"But it's not. It's not easy!" interjected Herman.

"But where there's a will, there is a way," sang Nellie, as she began preparing for the night's rest. She and Josephine were both tired, having worked in the garden, and both demanded a little sleep. Herman was tired, with sawing and chopping down trees for his house too.

Will took his cow a treat. Without much difficulty he managed to get the cow milked and chilled the milk in a can in the creek. He then rolled up in his blankets for the night, glad to close his eyes after the four days' journey to the new homestead.

It was all quiet, out there under the summer stars, except for a distant coyote bark-howl. But Will was half asleep already. Like little Josephine that night all the others were too tired to think of saying any prayers.

NEW LOG HOUSE

Next morning two men and a team were busy early after breakfast drawing in a set of fifty long spruce and pine building logs for Herman's and Nellie's new home. One by one they were skidded into the space and laid around four sides on the line between the two homesteads. After the first couple logs were drawn in, it became more easily done, as the first logs knocked off any rough bumps. It was a gentle, downhill slope to the house site so that part of the work was soon completed.

"Well, Herman, that is a good beginning. I never thought you would have enough logs ready for the building now."

"I'll bring in a few poles for skids and floor beams, Will."

"You both better come and have a cup of coffee," called Nellie, hoping it might be a help to the men.

"It would not go badly," agreed Will.

"I'll just get these and turn the oxen loose first," responded Herman, and he soon had the poles needed.

"How are you going to get a house level on that hillside?"

"Well, Nellie, when you scrub the floor you can tell the direction the water runs," joked her brother, Will.

"Smarty! You tell that one to Josephine."

"I heard it, Mamma. I don't believe it. Daddy has a level."

In a little while the two men were digging a bit on the hillside to begin the construction. They chose the two largest logs for the base of the structure, and they placed the large ends downhill. Then they slipped another timber or large log under the two butts of the foundation logs.

"I'll notch in some tamarack poles for floor stringers now."

"Good! These dry poles will make good rafters too, Herman."

"But I have barely enough cut for the floor beams, Will."

"It will be easy to level them up."

"Not too easy," declared Herman, as he laid three poles in place and placed a board across the poles.

"Shall we place these floor stringers every two feet?"

"I think that will do," answered Herman.

In a short time the dozen floor beams were notched into the base logs and a new round of logs was rolled up. The two men used the light poles, one at each end of a log to help roll the logs into place. They made joints at the four corners and by noon four rounds were laid up. Herman made some sawcuts, with Will's help, for windows. Each log was dowelled with a wooden pin or two in the centre to the log below.

Josephine was a good girl to help her mother and stay out of the men's way. But they were glad when she came to call them for lunch. "Come to dinner, Dad, Uncle Will," she told them, and Will gave her a ride back on his shoulders.

"I'm glad, Daddy, that we are going to have a house."

"I think Mama and all of us are glad," agreed her Dad.

"How many days till we have a house?" Uncle Will, puzzled a bit by the child's question, still answered her quickly, knowing how anxious she was to have it finished.

"Maybe a few days now, Josephine," he speculated.

"That's a wild guess," objected Herman, who heard Will.

"Things have got to move faster with everyone's mind set on this house," Will apologized.

"But we've got to get wood for floors and roof," Nellie joined in the argument.

"We could use poles for a temporary roof," suggested Will.

"That is good only where it does not rain," said Herman.

"It might rain any day, so we had better get lumber for the roof and floor," lamented Nellie, "but where?"

"I'll tell you, Nellie and Herman, I'll go down to Onoway to get it, if there is none any closer," offered Will.

"That's good of you, Will," said Herman, gratefully.

Two days later the men were about finished with the walls of the new log house; they had cut holes for a door and windows in the walls; and were now ready for the roof and floor lumber. Herman was planning a substitute for lumber as it would be a four or five day trip to Oonway.

Just a little past noon it was, when suddenly they heard a whistle. "Whoo, whoo, whoo!" It was a train and it was quite close, perhaps just two miles south of their place.

"Hurrah! Hurrah!" shouted Herman.

"Whew! Whew!" echoed Will. "I knew we'd get a railway."

Nellie waved her hat in glee.

"That sounds very good to me," she said, and smiled.

Josephine danced with her mother. Will jumped down from the new wall and swung them around as in a square dance.

"It sounds fine to me also," said Herman who came down to join in the fun and celebrations.

"I'll go down to the railway and find out if it is possible to get a little lumber brought up to the end of the steel. They are likely laying the track now," said Will.

On making enquiry at the train, Will learned that the steel was being laid each day and that he could ride down in the evening, get some lumber loaded and come back with the train crew that following morning from Onoway.

"I'll figure out exactly what we need and go with you."

So the following day he unloaded the material they needed to finish the house floor and roof from the rail-laying train about two miles from their building site.

"Hello, Herman! Hello, Nellie and Josephine! Good news!" he exulted. "I got our lumber! I have the windows and the door! All we have to do is drive over to the track and bring it home."

"Three cheers!" shouted Herman, who had been cutting poles of dry tamarack and spruce for rafters for the house.

"Amen!" said Nellie.

"Was that a prayer?" asked Josephine.

"Yes, in a way. And Uncle Will has the answer when he brings the lumber home. We, all, will pray that everything goes well till he gets back."

The happy group sang old songs that night after supper, which included some asparagus from her garden. No wonder they were all in a jolly mood and were happy. They played some records on their phonograph.

"Well, Will, today we'll get the rafters up and part of the roof," declared Herman early the next morning.

"It is good hay weather, let us make hay while the sun shines," replied Will.

And so they did. They worked hard and late that night and when they stopped working they had nearly one half the roof done. The next day the roof was finished. And the following day they began to put down the floor, when the shingles were done.

"When you want to build a house or barn or anything you can count on me to help you, Will," promised Herman.

"I shall," Will replied.

"Even now I can begin to move into our new house," Nellie commented as they ate lunch that day at their camp fire.

"And the way those clouds are threatening in the southwest, I think we are due for a rain again soon," said Will.

"At least, we can sleep under a new roof tonight," Herman admitted, "thanks to Will's good help."

"Yes, it seems we have much for which to thank Will," Nellie declared, as she and Josephine began bringing in bedding.

"Where shall we make my bed, Daddy?" asked the girl.

"Right back in this corner," he told her.

They had the floor laid there, so she put her things in it very happily, as would any little girl who had been away on a very long trip. The men kept busy and by night-fall the floor was almost completed in the four-roomed cabin.

"Where are you going to sleep, Uncle Will?" asked Josephine. "I can bring in your blankets if you like."

"Don't bother, I can sleep up in the loft above; I'm used to sleeping on hard ground now," he said, jokingly. "Thanks!"

There was no one Josephine liked better than her Uncle Will, however. He had played with her, pulled her sled in winter since she was a baby. He had taught her to swim, had drawn her pictures. A little while later she came packing his bed roll from his wagon into the new house.

"There, Uncle Will, you can sleep in that corner!" she emphatically declared, as she placed it neatly in the other east corner of the log cabin.

"Haw, hah!" laughed her father, and her soberness impressed him, as she stood there, satisfied with her task.

"Thank you, Jo, my pretty girl!" said Will, and he immediately rewarded her with a kiss.

"No wonder she does things for you, Will!" said her father.

"Mamma kisses me more than you do!" pouted the girl.

"Does she, Josephine?" asked her father.

"Yes, she does!" So Herman kissed her too.

"You are Mamma's good little helper, Jo," he praised. "I believe Daddy never had time to kiss you like Mamma," he apologized. He then kissed her twice again.

Nellie then appeared in the doorway with her arms full of bedding and clothing. Herman put a nail in the wall for hanging things.

"Nellie, I was thinking that since we have no chinking between the logs of the house yet, you might like to tack up a board or some cardboard behind Jo's bed to stop draft from wind."

"I'll see what I can find."

"Put a nail for me, Daddy," said Jo, who followed her mother with her own clothing, upon two coat hangers.

The next morning was a thrill. Everyone was quite happy to awaken within the walls of a log house, although there were really no windows nor doors in place nor partitions for rooms. Tent canvas placed in openings helped to break the wind.

"It's raining, Nellie. It's pouring on the roof, Will," called Herman, who was up first and who had a good fire made in a little cook stove he had set up late the previous night.

"I can hear it on the roof," answered Nellie.

"So can I, Mamma," chimed in Jo, who awakened suddenly.

"Raining, Herman? Does the roof leak?" asked Will.

"I don't notice any trouble spot yet."

"Some hay weather! I was hoping to get at the hay soon," lamented Will, quickly pulling on his shirt, pants and boots.

"Lucky we, all, are to have a roof under which to sleep!" declared Herman, as he commenced to get some breakfast.

"I feel too happy for words," said Nellie joyfully. She gave Herman a hug and a kiss. Then she gave Will one too.

"Me too! I could dance!" Jo repeated her mother's good morning hug and kiss, and then she did do a dance.

"One needs to dance to be warm this morning!" said Nellie drawing on her shoulders a little sweater she had.

"Well, put on a record on the phonograph and dance," laughed Herman. "But I'm going to have a bowl of hot porridge."

"Will, I wonder if you can find your cow to milk her today."

"I don't know, Nellie, but I'll try!" said her brother, as he put a record on the phonograph. And he and Jo danced around on the new floor in glee. "Floor seems solid, Herman."

Will searched the edge of the heavy bush that morning, looking for their cow, as that was the direction she and the oxen were last seen. But no cow nor oxen. Will returned quite wet.

"I saw neither cow nor oxen!" he announced.

"Too bad, too bad!" sympathized his sister.

"I called and called! And I saw no cow!" Will declared.

"Probably lying down somewhere," suggested Herman.

"Yes, with rain the mosquitoes are not bothersome," commented Will. "I couldn't hear a sound of a bell at all."

"Tell you what, Will! You take that big, loud cowbell of mine. I'll take a little, old dinner horn. That ought to find the animals!" declared Herman.

"It might at that!" agreed Will, so the two men tramped and tramped the poplar bush that morning.

"We'll stop to listen at times," agreed the searchers.

All to no avail, it seemed, they walked and walked. They came upon an old trail through the woods, still ringing the big cowbell and blowing the tin dinner horn in turn.

"Tell you what," suggested Herman. "You go to the left, I'll go to the right on this trail. It ought to bring us somewhere."

"Okay, I believe this is a good idea; we'll cover more ground," agreed Will.

Will walked the old trail, which apparently had not been used much for a long time. Herman found the cow and oxen in less than a half hour, the animals being a bit disturbed by the horn. He drove them home and gave them some salt to lick to soothe them.

"I think I'll milk the cow, Nellie, it is still raining!"

"Thanks, Herman!" said the wife, who had, while the men worked on the house, done the milking.

"How good some milk will taste for our porridge!" exclaimed Jo', who was playing with her doll.

"Yes, it will!" agreed her mother. "Has your doll had her breakfast yet, Jo?"

"No, Mamma!"

"Well, both of you may have some fresh milk when Daddy gets bossy milked."

"I wonder where Uncle Will is, Mamma."

"I think he is still looking for the cow."

"Why, Daddy brought the cow home, and is now milking her."

"I know, dear, but Uncle Will was looking north and Daddy went east, a different direction."

"I know, Mamma, that is east where the sun rises, and that is north where the pretty northern lights shine at night."

"But when it is raining, I'm afraid they cannot travel much by the sun or the moon or the Aurora Borealis night lights."

When Herman came in with his milk pail he said, "Nellie, I found something beside the cow along what is about our east line."

"What was that, Herman? Not a gold mine?"

"It might be," he smiled, "but they sometimes call it black gold."

"Black gold?" she questioned, "You mean oil, don't you?"

"That's it! I found a marking as if much prospecting had been done. If it is really true, it might prove our land valuable," replied Herman.

"Well, east along the creek I've noticed marks that look like iron very much," observed his wife.

"I noticed something else along the creek. I'm sure it was tracks of deer," avowed Herman.

NEIGHBORS

That day revealed some things to Will Lane that were surprises. Will Lane had walked not more than three miles from home on this bush trail, when suddenly the road ended. With his big cowbell Will felt suddenly abashed, he had seen no cows along the trail. The thickly tree covered land opened into some well-farmed area. How beautiful was the parkland scene! Will crossed a field and went through two fence gates. He knocked at a door.

"Come in!" was the friendly answer to his knock.

Will turned the knob. In the porch that he entered was a counter and many groceries. It was a store.

A young lady was a customer.

Will Lane quickly set that big cowbell upon the floor by the door. He approached the counter where a man stood.

"My name is Will Lane. I am looking for some animals."

"My name is Pete Shone. This is Miss Myrtle Hemmingson."

"I came through the woods three miles. We have been there about two weeks. Have any stray animals come this way?"

Will shook hands with the storekeeper and bowed to the pretty young lady. She smiled and finished her buying.

"Miss Hemmingson, I mean Myrtle, lives in the house just south of us. She has two bags of groceries."

"Oh, I'll manage them all right, Pete!"

"Oh, no, let me carry one for you, Myrtle!" offered Will.

She let him carry one; the walk was short; and it was a chance for two young people to get acquainted, walking slowly.

They did just that. Imagine what they said.

At her home, Will held the door open for her and then carried her groceries into the kitchen for her.

"Won't you sit down a few moments to rest? I'll get you a cup of tea very quickly."

"Well, thank you, I'll be glad of that before I start home."

"So you folk are new neighbors of ours across the bush."

"It seems wonderful to have neighbors so close."

"We have been here more than six years," she said.

"What do you call the settlement here?"

"This end of it is Lake Majeau. Five or six miles east of us they call it Rich Valley."

"I never thought there were many settlers so close."

"We went over your way to pick blueberries once."

"Did you? How were they? Were there many?"

"Well, there were lots of them and we got pails of them."

Tea was now ready and some sandwiches. Her mother came in from the garden and Myrtle introduced their new neighbor.

"Won't you people come over to see us some Sunday?" asked Will Lane. "My sister, Nellie, will be glad to hear that we have neighbors close."

"How far is it?" asked Myrtle.

"Just three miles, I think."

"We will come sometime," said Mrs. Hemmingson.

"Thank you, Myrtle. Thank you for the tea and sandwich."

"You are welcome!" said Myrtle.

"You are welcome," said her mother.

Will went past the store to pick up his cowbell as he set out for home. Here he purchased a few things to carry home from Pete Shone's store.

"Are there many taking land west of the bush?"

"I think there are more than I know about. I know of a few."

"I heard at Onoway that the steel is being laid on the C. N."

"That's right; they got as far north and west as our line two weeks ago. I believe they lay about one half mile of track a day, but sometimes they have to rebuild the grade."

"You saw them then working on the railway."

"Yes, I did. They wanted me to work as cook on gang."

"Oh! How many men?"

"I think about one hundred."

"How far will your place be from the railway and the new town?" asked Pete.

"Three or four miles."

"We are more than fifteen miles to Onoway."

"Why don't you start a store over there on the railway?"

"I might do so. But I have my farm here, too."

"Ride over to see us some Sunday. They say blueberries are good to pick over our way."

"Yes, they are; we have been over there other years."

"Come and have a sing-song. We like to sing. We don't play any musical instrument but we do play the phonograph."

"That's an idea. Hemmingsons like to sing."

"Yes, that is fine. Bring them over too."

"Well, neighbor, you may see us any evening."

"Thanks, we'll be looking for you, come any time."

"How would you like to go for a boat ride on Lake Majeau with Rose and Myrtle and me? We could take some wieners and buns, and have a picnic."

"I think I'd love to do so. Rowing? I had a canoe until a year ago," declared Will.

"Well, goodbye for now."

"Goodbye and thanks. I'm glad to have met you and Myrtle. I have begun to like the bush country better."

"We always liked it here for more than six years."

"I can see why, Pete, you make friends with your neighbors."

"Well, Will, we try to do so," said Pete.

They shook hands as they parted. And Will hurried along the old Lac la Nonne trail through the bush to his new home.

"Hello, I thought I'd have to come and hunt you, Will; I thought you must have been lost or had had an accident."

"Well, Herman, I have had some surprises to tell you about."

"I found the cow and oxen and have milked the cow."

"So we can go in and sit down," suggested Will.

"I have saved some dinner, I'll warm it up," said Nellie, as he entered the house.

"It would be fun to have a dance in the house, Uncle Will, before we cut it up to make rooms in it," said Josephine.

"But who would come to dance with us, Jo?" asked Herman.

There must be some neighbors who would come," said Jo.

"That is just what I wanted to tell you about."

"What is that, Will?" asked Nellie.

"I walked about three miles on the trail north and came to neighbors. Three or four houses and some nice people."

"Isn't that fine, Will, to meet with some new neighbors?"

"Yes, Nellie. I think they would come to see us."

"Yes, it is nice that you found them, Will."

"Well, at one house, Pete Shone lived and kept a store. A young lady was there. Pete introduced me to her. I helped carry her load of groceries to her home and there met her mother. They gave me a cup of tea and a sandwich. They have been there six years. They said they came to pick blueberries over here other years and would like to come again. They said they like to sing and I told them we did too. They said they would come sometime. But the road through that bush is rough. It is too rough to drive a wagon. One could ride horseback, or in winter go by sleigh."

"But if it is three miles that is just a nice walk for young people, Will," interposed Nellie.

"That is true. By the way, Nellie, I brought a few things from Pete's store. He was quite friendly. He offered to take me for a boat ride on Lake Majeau, rowing."

"Is the settlement French, Will?" asked Herman.

"No, I think there are a few French at the lake, but Hemmingsons are Swedish. I think most of the people are Swedish. Pete is English or German."

"How nice that you met them, Will," agreed Herman. "With the McCreas on the west who are Irish and these other neigbors on the east, soon we shall have a school for Josephine."

"Mamma and I had a lesson together today, Uncle Will."

"Did you, Jo? A rainy day can be valuable to everyone."

A few days later other neighbors came to visit at Herman Sears' log cabin. They had a surprise visit from the Crawfords, and another from the Nordquists, both new settlers on the edge of the woods, less than a mile southeast.

"I like all these new neighbors I have met," said Nellie, "the Crawfords from Iowa, the Nordquists from the Dakotas, and I am certain I shall like the people Will met just across the bush." She thought, "Who would come next to welcome them?"

"Nellie, I wonder who is taking a bath in all these four tubs lined up under the edge of the roof of the house?"

"Look out, Will, it might be you. I'm having a wash day tomorrow if you want to have anything washed. The creek water seemed like hard water with iron in it until it rained the other day. So I caught tubs of rain water!"

"McCreas came to visit next one evening. And what fun! They brought along Tom Price who played the violin. There was more than song that night; there was some dancing as he played two steps and for a square, little and big, old and young enjoyed themselves immensely," said Will, as he described the visits by various families to Pete Shone at the store a few days later. "We have more neighbors than we knew we had."

"I suppose they are, like you, all busy building their first house and getting a roof before it rains any more."

"I've started to cut hay, so I hope for no rain for a while," laughed Will.

"That is what I'm doing, Will, right at present."

"Come over and bring Rose and Myrtle," invited Will.

"We shall. We'll be along some evening or on a Sunday."

"I'm riding an Indian pony I bought from the Crees. He is a good saddler, and cheap."

"He will save you many steps looking for cows."

"Yes, Pete, he could be a good school pony and save us much time, going to store or post office."

"Nellie and Herman Sears," said Will the next night, "you have some new visitors tonight. It is the Meyers and Kaisers from over south of Nordquists' place, along the edge of the bush. What shall we make for lunch? This time let me make some bannock buns, Nellie," suggested Will.

"Okay, Will. I'm tired from washing today."

"Fine! I'm a good bachelor if I want to be, you know."

The buns were not hard to chew and Will's sister rested. And they all enjoyed the visit that evening. Will was tired too, cutting hay, and went to sleep at once as soon as they got to bed that night.

The next Sunday afternoon Pete and his girl, Rose Majeau, and Myrtle Hemmingson came with pails to pick blueberries.

"Do you think they are ripe?" asked Will, after he had introduced his friends to his relatives.

"Certainly, they have been picking berries more than a week."

"Have they, Pete?"

"Myrtle and Rose were out last week and got a pail each."

"Good," said Will. And in less than an hour Will and Pete filled a water pail one half mile north of the Sears' cabin.

"Come next Sunday, Will. I've arranged for that boat ride down on Lake Majeau's row boat at Rose's place."

Hunting the Deer

COOL WATERS

"Will, did you notice that wet spot on the trail east from the house right below the pines?"

"No, I didn't pay any attention to it."

"Well, I think we have a spring on the hill there, beside the spruce and the pines."

"Really, Herman!"

"Yes, Will, I was telling Nellie and Josephine about it."

"Let us go up and examine the place," Will suggested.

"It is very interesting. I think if we have little rain we would have only water in the creek below the spring."

"Let us taste a drink above the roadway."

"The road is wetter here below the spring, Will."

"It is ice cold and tastes of iron."

"Cool waters!" said Herman, as he knelt and drank.

"Let us trace the water to its source."

"A stick floats from here, Will."

At that moment Herman stepped into muck and moss so soft one foot went down a foot or more. Will grabbed his hand and pulled him from the moss.

"That moss is muskeg," said Will.

"Yes, and the water underneath is ice-cold."

"Is it? The water is deep there, and it is more than three feet wide!" declared Will. He probed the depth with a stick.

"We had better fence the muskeg off or we will have some animals stuck in here," said Herman, who needed a dry sock.

"You had better go into the house, Herman, and get some dry clothes. We should fence cattle out of this muskeg. I believe we could pipe this spring water to the house and barn."

"At least, we can run it to a trough in the barn."

"And that would be down the hill close to the house."

"Let us stick a trough in the soft moss here and make all water run out of one spot," advised Herman.

Herman ran to the house to spread the good news to

Nellie and get a pair of dry socks. She and Josephine had to come out to the hill east of the house to see the wonderful spring the men had discovered. Excitement ran rather high for a while.

Will was busy nailing together a couple of boards left from the house building and he and Herman carried it to the spring. Here they placed the trough into the moss and soon the cool water filled a hollow spot in a log made for a drinking trough, just below the hill. This in turn they saw could be carried to a house or barn built slightly nearer to the creek than their first log cabin.

"Free running water in our home, Nellie!"

"Just think of it!" she replied to Herman's declaration.

"It is cold and good," said Will, who knelt and drank.

"Ice cold!" yelled Jo.

"Whooo! So cold! Tastes much of iron!" said Nellie.

"A little of that stuff goes a long way," admitted Herman, sampling the cool drink again.

"It will be fine for storage of milk and cream," said Will.

"You find new surprises every day here," meditated Nellie.

"Yes, we do, we certainly do!" rejoiced Herman. "Oil, spring water, neighbors, good hay and lumber. What else do we need?"

"A good wife and family and a good dinner," said Nellie, and she started for the house to look after the midday meal.

"Keep some cold water for me," said Jo, as she went too.

"What is this about oil?" asked Will.

"Didn't I tell you yet, Will? In the woods just a short distance from where we parted on the trail the other day, I saw markings someone had made on a tree quite recently, regarding oil explorations. We have more than spring water here."

"You don't say!" remarked Will. "Well, what next?"

"Perhaps you would like to get some hay in a stack before it rains any more," suggested Herman.

"That I would! Let us get busy and make hay while the sun shines," agreed Will gladly. "Oil discovery, eh?"

That afternoon the men worked hard in the hay meadows.

"I think I can build a barn near the creek and a drive

on that ridge so I can roll the hay from the rack right into the loft of the barn, Herman."

"That would be handy and easier work than hay-stacking."

"Yes, build the roadway just a bit higher than the hayloft along the edge of the hill."

"Wait till next winter, Will, we shall get some lumber out together for building barns and dairy sheds and everything."

The two men got great pleasure out of planning the future buildings as they stacked hay together. Planning was fun and helped to make the hard work less of a task.

At supper time when the last load of hay was unloaded Will watered the team at the new spring watering trough. This was quite a fine new addition to the farmyard.

"How does the spring drinking trough suit the animals?"

"Fine, Herman, fine! They like it fine!"

"I'm sure it is better than drinking in the grass and among the willows of the creek, Will."

"I agree, the trough is more convenient for many reasons."

Herman commenced making a fence around the muskeg where the new cold spring was found, to keep out the animals from this soft, dangerous, mossy place.

Will saddled his pony, Dan, that evening. Even though haying was vigorous exercise, Will Lane liked to ride this pony. Dan had speed, he liked to gallop, until his mane and tail seemed to rise and fall like waves on the sea.

Will liked to fly along too. Tonight, however, Will Lane planned to make hay of another kind; by moonlight if necessary. Will did not have to ride to Peace River 300 miles north to find that for which he was looking. Instead he planned just a short ride.

Will rode quickly through the pine and poplar bush and put those three miles behind him in a short time. He turned south at Pete Shone's gate when he reached the edge of the bush and in a few moments he was knocking at Myrtle Hemmingson's door. Her father was there, and seemed pleased to meet Will. He was a friendly Swedish father, who enjoyed visiting as did most of these men from the Dakotas and Minnesota. One could tell easily that he was a good builder, like most of the Swedes. And, like Will Lane, he liked playing checkers, dominoes and other games. They had a game or two. And they had watchers! Myrtle, his blond daughter, and her mother sat close and laughed at the strategists as they played.

Then, of course, there came the coffee. When the cups were cleared and conversation lagged, Will asked Myrtle to come out to see his new, young pony. She took fancy to Dan, the pony, and Dan showed he was pleased by the nose pushes, and soon she got into the saddle to try his lope.

"There is a dance down in Rich Valley on Friday night, Will," said Myrtle. "Would you like to go? I have a saddle pony, also. We could ride together."

"Would I? You bet I would with you!"

"I think Pete and Rose will likely go. They like to dance."

"Do they dance squares?"

"Oh, yes, they do! And they dance polkas and schottisches, and many more. I can't remember the names of them all."

"That suits me if it suits you, Myrtle," said Will.

"So I'll see you again then on Friday evening," she said. "Well, I'll be ready about nine."

"Thank you for telling me, and thank you for the date, for asking me. I won't know many."

"You won't have to know many. Goodnight."

And Will kissed her.

"Thank you again," he said, as he mounted his pony.

Soon he was on his way home through the woods, much thrilled.

On Friday night Will left the homestead at eight in the evening and was early for his date with Myrtle Hemmingson. She was good company, and she was, like most Swedish girls, a good dancer. Pete and Rose did show up a bit late, but in time to have several dances, one of which was a square dance in which Pete and Will exchanged partners. At the end Pete spoke to Will, and to Myrtle.

"Sunday is the only day I can really get away from the store, so I'll be looking for you and Myrtle at about 1:30 to go for a boat ride over at Rose Majeau's lake."

"We'll be there," promised Will, and Myrtle smiled a pretty, happy acquiescence or mutual agreement.

"I do like a boat," declared Will, as they rode home together on their ponies.

"I do very much like the lake too."

"Do you, Myrtle? I used to have a canoe on Lake Michigan before I came out to Canada!"

"Did you? That is a big lake for a canoe! When I was a little girl we lived near the source of the Mississippi in Minnesota near a lake."

"I think I saw that lake once, Myrtle."

Will Lane was on hand to ride to the lake with Myrtle at the appointed time Sunday; Myrtle made him feel at home at their house. Her parents were quite friendly.

"Come over some Sunday morning and drive to church with us," invited the girl's mother. "Myrtle needs some company."

"I shall do so, I like to sing."

"Goodbye, have a good boatride!" said her mother.

"Goodbye," added her father, as the young folk departed.

"How far is it?" asked Will, when he was astride his pony.

"Nearly four miles, I think," she replied.

"We won't keep Pete and Rose waiting!" The ponies loped along at a lively clip.

"I saw Pete start out as you came to our gate," said the girl at his side.

"What do you think, I have a job. I've got to earn some money," said Will.

"Money doesn't grow on trees, these days, I know."

"How do you know that?" asked Will.

"Sister and two brothers married and homesteading."

"Your mother and father think the world of you, Myrtle."

"Do they? I baked some cinnamon rolls for our picnic today," she said, changing the subject.

"Did you, Myrtle? I like those better than cake."

"I'm glad you do! You'll have to eat one for lunch. I hope you'll like it, Will." She adjusted the lunch bag on the saddle pommel.

"My pony's name is Dan. What do you call yours?"

"I call him Robin to pet him, but when I want to go, Bob."

"The horse jumped to a trot when he heard his name."

"Yes, Bob knows his name, that's sure."

"Did you have Robin for a long time?"

"Oh, yes, we raised him from a colt, four years now."

"Is that so?" asked Will.

Over the crest of a hill they saw Pete tying his horse at a convenient tree near the edge of the lake.

"We have most caught up to Pete," she declared.

"Oh, have we? Yes, and there is Rose. She has a basket."

Down the hill to the lake trotted two more ponies, and the riders dismounted quickly.

"Hello, Rose and Pete," greeted Will and Myrtle.

"Hello, Myrtle and Will," replied Pete and Rose.

"Right on time!" added Rose.

"Good weather too," offered Myrtle.

"Good haying weather!" declared Will.

"Well, good haying weather is also good boating!" argued Pete. He led the way to the rowboat which had two pairs of oars.

"Rose and I will row awhile and then you and Will can row, Myrtle!" said Pete, holding the boat so that his two guests could get into the back seat. Then Rose climbed into the rowing seat. The boat eased off from the shore and Pete also climbed in.

"We'll go over to that island for our wiener roast and lunch."

"All right, Pete," agreed Rose. "You steer, as I go round in circles when I steer."

"Not a ripple in the water until they took hold of the oars."

"Will sounds like a poet today," said Rose, as she dipped the oars in the water, and Pete began to pull hard on his pair.

"Do you like fishing? You should bring a line, Will," said Rose.

"I take it the fishing is good, then," replied Will.

"It is better in early morning and late evening," said Rose.

"Does this lake ever get rough?" asked Will.

"Does it? I'll say it does! Give it a bit of wind."

"Well, Rose, it is smooth and quiet today."

"Let it be quiet till we get home. Don't wish for wind."

"How far is it to the island?" asked Myrtle.

"Perhaps a mile and a half."

"I judge we are about half way now," said Myrtle.

"I think you are right, Myrtle," answered Rose.

"I think you should talk less and row harder," criticized Pete.

"I'll take over, Pete, if you are tired," offered Will.

"All right, Will. You slip up here, easy now. Then I'll move back." And they managed it quite well.

"Now, Myrtle, do you want to take my place rowing?"

"Yes, Rose. I'll move first, then you move back."

Again the exchange in rowers was carefully made.

Pete complimented the girls. "You have done that before."

"A few times, Pete," said Myrtle, glad of his approval.

"We are old sailors," bragged Rose.

"Are you?" asked Will. "You tell me if I am heavy on my right or left oar, Pete. Keep me toward the island."

"You are doing all right. Go steady."

"Myrtle and Will make a good pair at that," said Rose.

Pete laughed. "I guess they do, Rose."

"Keep it up, Myrtle, you are doing fine," praised Rose.

"Won't they have a good appetite for lunch?" joked Pete.

"Appetite's growing all the time," admitted Will.

"Almost there now!" at last sang out Pete.

"When you touch the shore, Will, you hop out and give the rope a pull," said Rose.

"You are a good sailor, Rose. I hope you have the lunch dry," said Will.

"Yes, it is dry, Will."

"But we'll make coffee," said Pete, taking off his boots.

The beach was sandy and wide, the boat nosed into the sand.

"Congratulations!" said Pete. "You are a perfect pair."

"Thanks," offered Myrtle.

Soon they were all gathering some wood for a fire for wieners and coffee. Pete and Rose were often here at this camp spot, it was evident. They soon had the fire and lunch ready. It was fun for all four of the young folk. Pete waded out far from shore to obtain water for the coffee.

"The lake is beautiful today, girls," said Will, as he forked two willows for the wieners.

"So are the buns," admitted Pete, as he took one to wrap around a wiener.

"Here is one for you, Myrtle," proffered Will.

"Thank you, Will. Now you try one of my buns."

"With great pleasure," replied he.

"What about me, Rose? Are you waiting on me?" asked Pete.

"Here, help yourself," she said, passing a bag to him.

"How far is it around the island, Pete?"

"Well, Will, it is a long way."

"Too far for a short walk," laughed Rose.

After all four had a second cup of coffee and one of Myrtle's cinnamon rolls the lunch was cleared up and each couple took a very short walk on the sandy beach. The sun of August was wonderfully warm and waterfowl and duck were everywhere. Birds mingled with the shore fowl in the joyous summer day.

"Want to start back, Will? Or do you want to stay longer?"

"Well, Rose, I'll stay longer if Myrtle wants to."

"Pete and I have something to tell you on the way back."

"Okay, we are ready. We have run out of words and are just swinging with our hands," the girl in the pair responded.

"We are thinking, Myrtle meant, how nice it is here together," laughed Will, his hand swinging with hers.

When they were in the boat again, Will and Myrtle rowed first and Rose and Pete sat in the back.

"Pete and I have decided on October 12 for our wedding. Will you be one of my bridesmaids, Myrtle?"

"Congratulations! I'd love to be your bridesmaid, Rose."

"That is pretty serious business you have decided over on the island, Rose and Pete. Congratulations!" said Will.

"Thanks! I think it has been decided for some time, except for the date," admitted Rose.

"I have to build a house before I think of weddings."

"Why, Will," said Pete, "one can always build a log house, but he does not need one unless he has a cook. Who wants to be bachelor until he dies?"

"Quite true. Well, I was doing some thinking."

"So was I, Will. Pete is five years older than you or I am," said Myrtle.

That ended the teasing. At the half way mark Pete and Rose changed with the rowers and rowed to the landing on the shore. It had been good exercise and a lovely picnic.

"Come over and go fishing sometime with Pete and my brother," said Rose to Will, when they saddled their ponies for their ride home.

"Goodbye, Rose and Pete," said Myrtle, and she shook hands.

"Goodbye," offered Will, with his handshake. "Good luck."

Homeward, Myrtle and Will let the ponies take their time. It had been a grand boat ride and picnic, and the ride home on horseback could finish the outing pleasantly. There was no hurry. It did.

"It has been a lovely picnic, Myrtle, and I liked your cinnamon roll very much. But I like much more your company."

"I enjoyed your company very much too. I'm glad I made the rolls and you like them."

"What are you planning to do next Sunday, Myrtle?"

"Church in the morning."

"May I come and go with you?"

"I'd love to have you come if you wish. Mom and Dad like to go and enjoy having us at Sunday dinner."

"I'll come, I like singing along with you."

"When are you going to work on the railway and what are you going to do?"

"I think I'm to be timekeeper on the steel laying gang."

"Are you?"

"I start tomorrow."

The ponies walked close together once, and Will kissed the girl beside him. She smiled and blushed a little at her next word and thought. "Was that your intention, or was it just Dan?"

"It doesn't matter very much, it was very nice."

"You will stay next Sunday after church to dinner with us, Will. Dad and Mother will want you to do so, and so will I."

Thank you, Myrtle. You are very kind to me, very neighborly."

"I am good to myself, you mean. One can afford to be neighborly."

They parted at her gate, and Will hurried along the bush trail home. But I think both of the young folk treasured long that ride and picnic at Lake Majeau. And I think all four who were at this Lake Majeau picnic on the island will remember this good time they had the rest of their lives.

Myrtle

WILL LANE COOKS, LAYS STEEL

On Monday morning as planned Will Lane departed early, walking to the railway grade to begin duties on the steel laying gang as timekeeper. They were still laying the steel past Glenevis, which now was only a spot where a train was supposed to stop. The steel gang was a bit delayed by lack of steel rails at times, it was further delayed by lack of crew or men, and by a drunken cook quite often. And today was no exception! On Sunday the cook had dug up a bottle somewhere and as a result of this there was no breakfast on Monday morning. The foreman of the gang was in hot water this morning about the gang's breakfast. Men wanted to quit, they wanted a guarantee of better food and three square meals a day.

"Say, Lane, can you cook? The men are on strike and won't go to work without breakfast. I don't blame them."

"Yes, I can cook. I won't starve."

"If you can cook, you can earn timekeeper's wages also. Make the men some coffee and porridge quickly."

"Have you plenty of canned milk?"

"Yes, open as many as you need. We have forty men here."

"Okay, breakfast in half an hour."

Soon Will was at work at the stove and coffee was made. Once a snore in the corner bunk nearly made him drop a coffee pot. Cups and forty bowls of porridge were upon the tables in the dining car a half hour later, ready for the men. A case of canned milk was opened and placed ready. Quickly toast and bacon began to appear, and a waiter rang the gong for breakfast.

There were many smiles on the faces of the men as they came in for breakfast. Before 8 o'clock they were ready to go out to work. With assistance of a couple of cookee helpers the dishes were washed and tables set for dinner. Will searched and at last found sufficient food to prepare the remaining two meals that day. He set to work, and by ten thirty that morning had things well along toward a meal

at noon. Still there came an occassional snore from the old cook in the corner, who had emptied a bottle of liquor.

The gang boss came in about that time and said, "You can come out with me to check the men on the job now."

Will took the work sheet from the boss and began to check the men's names who were working.

"It was a lucky thing you came along when you did this morning," admitted the boss when the task was done.

"In time for making porridge and coffee?" asked Will.

"Yes, that's what I meant."

The men were all busy, and steel was being laid on the railway grade on westward toward the Pembina and the Athabaska, as it had been for the past few weeks on the new branch.

"What shall I do when the cook wakes up?"

"Tell him to see me. I've had enough trouble with his drinking."

Dinner was served on time, and the old cook moved out that afternoon. Will carried on in his place, and supper climaxed his first day's efforts. He mixed up a batch of dough for pancakes for the next morning's breakfast.

"How in the world am I to get away the following Sunday?" thought Will. "If I'm to dine with Myrtle and her parents, how am I to have lunch ready here," he pondered.

He schemed and schemed a few days. Finally he decided he could make it if he worked late Saturday night. And that is exactly what he did. He had pies baked and a roast done before he went to bed, potatoes were peeled and a salad was made.

"Should I tell the boss I have a date Sunday before I leave, or should I let him find out later? He might fire me. But I have the Sunday meal nearly all ready."

Will Lane was tired and got to sleep. But it was a restless, disturbed slumber. When he wakened he jumped out with a startled feeling. And when breakfast was over he slipped out quietly, leaving one of his cookee helpers in charge.

He walked fast and tried to keep from worrying. Luckily Will found his pony on the meadow near the Pembina Creek. He barely stopped to greet his sister, Nellie, Josephine, his niece, and Herman, his brother-in-law. Soon he was in the

saddle and on his way to Myrtle. Through the woods he could think of little else than this girl, with whom he had promised to drive to church this Sunday morning. He arrived just in time. The Hemmingson team was already waiting, tied near the gate. Quickly he tied his pony in the yard.

"Oh, Will, I'm so glad you came. I thought you would miss getting here in time!"

"I was a bit worried too. I had to hustle!"

Myrtle's parents came out and got into the wagon at once, sitting in the front seat. A glad good morning was exchanged by Will and the parents. Myrtle and Will climbed into the vehicle and a moment later the horses were away at a fast clip.

"I tried not to keep you waiting, Myrtle," said Will as she sank into the seat beside him.

"I know, but now let's just enjoy the ride."

A hand she held firmly on the seat was covered by one of Will's.

"I really should have sent word I could not come."

"Something then did happen to delay you."

"Yes, it did." He laughed. "Perhaps I should not have made the date."

"It is a lovely day to take a ride."

Down hill from the height of land between the Pembina and the Saskatchewan, the wagon rolled easily and the horses were fresh. Will slipped one arm around the girl to make sure that she did not jostle out. She smiled slightly as she felt more secure. Her hand which pressed the seat in turn pressed his. Finally the pace of the horses slackened. Then a kiss was shared by the young folk in the back seat. Why not? They shared the joy of living.

They reached the church in time and found their seats quickly. In the song books they sought the pages of the first hymn, and slowly read the words of the selection silently. It seemed a pleasure to be near each other again, to be doing something interesting with one another. They soon were to sing together and they repeated the Lord's prayer with the minister and the others there. Both Will and Myrtle liked to sing, their voices blended well together. When the second hymn began, the girl and Will sang with more con-

fidence and it thrilled them deeply to hear their voices blend in the song.

When the service ended the minister thanked them for their participation. "Thanks for such good help in the singing."

"Oh, we both like to sing, Mr. Reikie," replied Will.

"Yes, we do! You can see we do!" agreed Myrtle.

Driving home, she asked Will, "What was it that delayed you this morning? You'll tell me, won't you?"

"Of course, Myrtle, but I don't really know what it was. I walked and part ran home to the homestead. Luckily Dan was handy. I saddled him, barely said hello to Jo and Nellie, my sister."

"I see nothing of a delay yet. Did you get up early?"

"Well, Myrtle, I was tired! On Sunday . . . oh, I'm yawning."

"You slept in; that was the delay!" She rested her head on a hand.

"Perhaps you guessed rightly. I'm still sleepy."

"Anyway, you moved when you got up. Bet that Dan loped for you."

"That he did through the bush. I worked late so I could come. It took an extra effort to get away."

"What do you mean? So you could come you worked late Saturday."

"I'm doing two jobs. I'm timekeeper and cook!"

"Mercy, no! Timekeeper and cook?"

"Yes, Myrtle. And a cook is supposed to work Sundays!"

"Then how did you get away?"

"I got things ready Saturday night!"

"You did, Will?"

"Yes. Then I left right after breakfast this morning."

"Well, our dinner is in the oven for us too."

"Is it? I've a good appetite, Myrtle."

"I hope you have, Will. There's roasted chicken."

"Gee, I'm glad I came! Roast chicken!"

"What was the cook planning to have for dinner on the gang?"

"On the rail-laying gang they were having roast beef."

"And what else, Will?"

"A salad and potatoes and apple pie made from canned apples."

"What would they have on the railway for salad?"

"Lettuce just lettuce, Myrtle."

"Lettuce makes good salad, we like it!"

"I do too, especially wilted lettuce like mother used to make. But I like it any way it is served."

"I'll see if I can fix some lettuce the way you like it."

"Thank you, Myrtle, how nice of you to try to do this."

"Are you going to try to come another Sunday to church?"

"Perhaps not while I'm on this rail gang."

"It seems a bit difficult for you with the cook job too."

"Yes it does, Myrtle. But when I can later I'd like to come and go with you again."

"Would you? I'm very glad. Mr. Reikie was happy about it."

"Yes, he complimented us on helping with singing."

"Well, here we are at Pete's farm and your farm."

"Yes, Myrtle. Nellie and Herman would like to meet your parents. Do try to bring them."

"Perhaps I can persuade them to drive over and we could pick blueberries together next Sunday afternoon."

"That would be nice for us. I'll hope that you do."

The dinner that day at Myrtle's place was wonderful, the wilted lettuce that the visitor liked so much was made by the girl and her guest was very appreciative of it.

"I never thought you could make anything so good as this lettuce, Myrtle. And the chicken is marvellous. And everything else was so good!"

"Well, you are hungry, and you were out for a long ride to church. No wonder things taste fine."

"I think you make everything taste better, Myrtle."

"And you make me want to do my best in the kitchen."

"And elsewhere," teased her mother. "I'm glad you could come," added Mrs. Hemmingson, "Myrtle and I like to cook for visitors, especially hungry ones."

"Do you? Well, you pleased your visitor this time."

"That's good," commented the girl's mother.

"Who wouldn't like to please you, Will?"

"It is nice to have good neighbors."

After pie was served and enjoyed, the girl's father suggested a game while the women cleared away the dishes.

"Just a short game of dominoes then, Mr. Hemmingson. I can't stay long today."

"Okay, dominoes it is, then."

The dishes were done quickly, and the dominoes game finished.

"Thank you for everything, Mrs. and Mr. Hemmingson and Myrtle. I hope you may be able to come over to our house next weekend. There may be more blueberries to pick too."

"Thanks. We'll try to come," said Myrtle's father.

"I'd like to meet your sister and her husband," said his wife.

"I'm sure they will like to meet you too."

Myrtle went out to the gate with Will to where his horse was tied. Pony Dan knew her and whinnied. She petted him.

"Do you like Dan, Myrtle?"

"Why shouldn't I, he likes me."

"Everyone should like you, Myrtle, you're so lovable."

"Do you think so?"

He did not answer with words. He answered with a warm hug and kiss. And then he untied his saddle pony.

"Goodbye, we'll hope to see you next Sunday."

And Will mounted to the saddle.

"Sorry you could not stay a bit longer. Goodbye, Will."

She patted Dan twice and waved a hand to Will as he departed.

Will was back at the railway gang in time to help with the supper. His assistant cookee had managed the dinner very well. The boss of the gang never even knew of Will's absence. Things went well another week. And Sunday came. This time Will had Dan in a pasture near the railway. A Frank Gooley lived there luckily and had a little pasture. So Will rode out to the homestead after dinner was over.

"Hello, Uncle Will. When are you coming back to live with us?"

"I don't know, Jo. We need a railway. I am trying to help build that railway."

"You know what? Daddy is helping to build a school."

"Is he? Well, that is bound to be useful too."

"Yes, I know."

"Some visitors are coming, I think, Jo, so I believe I'll go in and talk with your Mamma."

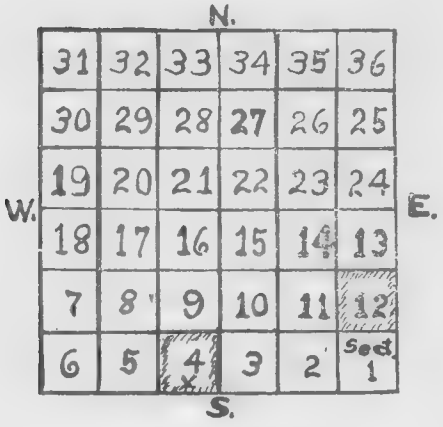
"Oh, Uncle Will, who is coming?"

"Myrtle and her parents are coming to go blueberrying."

"How far is it where you are working?"

"Here is a map I have, Jo," Will drew a map out of his pocket. "See, Jo, we are on section 12, township 56, range 4. On the railway I am working on section 4, about three miles away, on same township."

"Oh, good, Uncle Will, may I keep this map?"



Township 56, Range 4, West of 5 Meridian

BLUEBERRYING

"Hello, Nellie, can I do something for you?" asked Will.

"Yes, if you like you may bring me two pails of fresh water from the spring. I'll do the rest if you go blueberrying."

When Myrtle arrived a little while later, she was riding her pony. "Hello, Will, I rode my pony."

"So I see. Maybe we'll ride a bit when we are tired of searching for berries."

"Are your parents coming over today?"

"Mom wasn't feeling like riding or walking on the rough bush road." She added, "Perhaps in the winter by sled she'll come over through the woods."

"Well, perhaps in the winter they can come in a sled."

"Does your sister, Nellie, plan to go berrying?"

"No, she planned to get supper but maybe she might now."

Nellie was surprised. But she said Herman and Jo could pick berries and she would get supper. Therefore the four with their berry pails set out together.

Jo had a hundred questions for her father and several for Uncle Will. "You better pick berries or you won't fill your pail." He added, "Let's race to fill our pails, Jo!"

"But Daddy, I must ask questions so I'll know answers."

"You can save some questions till we get home."

"I'll try to work harder, Daddy."

"Myrtle, the berries are quite big, and fill the pail very quickly," declared Will.

"Yes, it looks as if there will be many good pies made."

"Yes, Myrtle, if I am not tempted to eat so many. Some are so big that I can scarcely help chucking them into my mouth!"

"So round and big and blue and juicy and sweet!"

With that the girl smiled as she ate and relished a handful of delightfully big berries. "I can't stop eating them, Will."

"Mother used to say, boys and girls should whistle while they pick berries to fill the pail quickly."

"It might help. But I can't whistle either."

"I'll tell you what! I'll whistle for you and you eat for me. Or you will have to talk to me to keep me from eating."

"I'll try it, but I don't think anything will help."

"You talk, Myrtle, because I like to hear you."

"Do you? All right. Do you like blueberry pie, Will?"

"Yes, very much! I think Nellie is going to make some."

"I am, too. Tell me when you will come to see me and I will promise to save some pie."

"May I come next Friday evening?"

"Certainly. I'll be delighted."

"Myrtle, you have blueberries on your face."

"Will, so have you."

"My pail is getting full. How is yours?"

Will and the girl were now some distance from Herman and Josephine, having been picking berries about a half hour.

"Mine is doing better than I had expected."

Will set his pail down and moved closer to Myrtle.

"Would you like a blueberry kiss," he asked in a whisper. And he held a big berry in his teeth.

"Yes," she whispered, and she turned her berry lips to him.

The contact was quite moist and there were blue markings of the contact. "That big, juicy blueberry was crushed."

"Mum! Mmm! I know two that love blueberry pie now." And Will drew a bandanna handkerchief from a pocket. Myrtle looked up to see Will removing the blue from around his lips.

"That isn't fair!" she claimed, and with wet berry lips she planted another berry kiss upon one of his cheeks. It left a generous mark there.

They both laughed at the stained faces now. Both could do with a washing now. Will lent Myrtle his bandanna, for which she was glad.

Herman called to Josephine loudly, "My pail is full! How's yours, Jo? Is your pail full yet?"

"Oh, not yet. But pretty soon!" she answered, "Pretty soon, Daddy."

"We'd better get busy!" decided Will.

"I'm agreed!" said Myrtle, and she set to work with new zeal to fill her pail with fresh fruit."

Blueberries that formerly went into two mouths now dropped into the pails. The pails filled rapidly. Will looked over at Myrtle's berries; Myrtle glanced to see his pail topping up. They were expecting any moment to hear Josephine say, "My pail is full now, Daddy!" and soon they did.

But now all the pails were filled, everyone could eat as many as he liked if he could hold any more.

"Shall we slip home now and all have a horseback ride?"

"Well, Myrtle, I think it will be a change from blueberrying."

They got the kink out of their backs as they walked back to the house. Then they both stretched their limbs in the saddle. After a short gallop they returned to see what joys awaited at the supper table. Jo had a ride on Dan too. Nellie knew better than to serve blueberry pie. Dessert was different.

But who wants blueberry pie after having a blueberry kiss? No one! So Nellie's supper suited all. She was very near an expert at making raisin bread puddings, and at many other special dishes. Myrtle and Will enjoyed and appreciated the meal very much and both of these young people enjoyed eating together again this Sunday in the log cabin on the edge of the bush.

"Will, before you get away tonight I want to ask you to let me put your name up as a school trustee so we can get a school started here for Josephine and six other children."

"All right if you need my name."

"We just need three names, three land holders."

"Then you can start a school."

"Yes, that is right. The best thing is we have Mr. McCrea here willing to give it a start with his time."

"That is fine."

"Yes, Will, we can get permission to start building a school building any time."

"Well, go ahead. Now if you excuse us, Nellie, Myrtle and I shall run along because I still have a double job on the railway. So I must get on that little pony of mine."

"Go ahead, Will. I know which way the pony is going first."

"You do, Nellie. Well, thanks for the lovely supper."

"Yes, thanks, Nellie. I'm sorry mother did not feel up to the trip through the bush today."

"You are welcome. Come again," invited Nellie.

Myrtle parted with a warm hand shake with each, Nellie, Jo, and Herman. Soon Will and Myrtle were upon their ponies, headed for the bush trail.

"Let me carry your pail of blueberries for you, Myrtle."

"Thanks, Will. You won't spill them."

"Not unless you take the trail at a gallop."

"What fun we had today. We'll remember it more than a week."

"What a clear, sunny day it has been."

"You ordered good weather, and got it, Will."

"More good luck than reasoning, I think."

"I'm very glad and thankful."

"Myrtle, it must have been dreary coming through the bush alone this afternoon."

"I did not mind, I'm used to the woods. I've often had to search for the cows, you know."

"You are your father's and mother's boy and girl combined."

"I suppose that is about it."

"How can they dare to let me have you sometimes?"

"I don't know, except that they are good to me. Of course, they like you too, Will."

"Do they? I'll try to ride over on Friday night, Myrtle."

"I'll try to get a shower up for Rose Majeau soon."

"I wonder when I'll go fishing with Pete over at the lake."

"That's an idea. You two go fishing sometime and I'll go over to visit with Rose."

"Perhaps she might like you to pick berries with her."

"That's another idea! You are full of ideas today."

"You put lots of ideas in my head."

"Do I? Like what?"

"Well, you know, I'm sure."

"I was thinking of a girls' shower for Rose."

"Were you, Myrtle. I was thinking of other things too."

"Like what, Will?"

"Well it was selfish, I suppose, but I was thinking of something for myself,—and—"

"And what else?"

"Myrtle, it is hard to talk, when one has nothing and is trying to homestead."

"You are young and are strong!" She smiled. "What does money matter?"

It matters quite a lot when you haven't got it."

"But no one has too much money out here in the west."

"Don't coax me to say it, girl. You know what I'd like to say."

"I think I do. But you didn't say it. It would be nice to hear it if you want to tell me something after today."

"After today! What happened today?"

"You know what happened. Many things!"

The two ponies walked and the girl smiled coquettishly.

"Myrtle! What a wonderful day we had in the berries today."

"And then a ride on ponies together and supper together."

"And now, Myrtle!"

"And now, Will!"

They both stopped the ponies, or did they?

"And I'm going to hold you and never let you go, but what shall I do with this pail of blueberries of yours?"

"If they bother you, let me carry my berries."

She took the pail of blueberries from him, being helpful or teasing him a little. He had no excuse now.

"What a lovely ending for this grand afternoon with you."

Will slipped one arm around the girl and then the other. She hooked the pail handle to the pommel of her saddle. Then her two arms locked around Will's neck and their lips met. She had wanted this; they both did, and now there was no denial.

The woods were lovely, with glorious golden sun sinking toward the sunset in the west. Birds sang above and about them, the trees made music over their heads, and there was a song in each one's heart. Each pony took one step forward, reminding the young people of the time. But they were held together by the locked embrace of their two riders. Finally

words came that Myrtle wanted to hear.

"I love you! I love you, Myrtle!"

"I'm so glad that you told me. Those are sweet words to hear."

"I've been telling you in many ways the past few weeks."

"I know, Will! But not in words!"

"We do not need words any more, do we?"

"No, we don't. But they are always welcome words!"

The girl began to sing as the ponies moved on toward her home, and her happiness was reflected to Will like ripples on a lake of sunshine. There was just one question now. When? But that question was hard to answer yet.

"Will you be able to ride to the lake to Rose's place?"

"I'll try to come Friday night."

But at Myrtle's gate someone else was there to see the girl tonight and had waited.

"Who is it? Who is it, all smiles, Myrtle?"

"You met him at church that Sunday, I think."

"I don't remember him or anyone else. All I could see for a long time was you, just you, Myrtle."

"I know, Will. Perhaps you would like to stay a while and have a game of something with me and my parents."

"That would be nice. Perhaps I will stay. I seem welcome, so I think I shall."

"You are more than welcome!" she answered.

"Hello, traveller! How are you Myrtle?"

"Very well, Carl. It's Carl Davies, Will. You remember Will Lane, who was at church one Sunday and a dance with me."

"Yes, I remember, Myrtle. And I remember that we went to school many years together," added Carl Davies.

"But now you'll have to forget that there was ever anything between you, Carl," said Will.

"O will I?" asked Carl.

"Yes, Carl. That would be the best," said Will.

"But Carl, there never was anything between us!" defied Myrtle. "Never anything!" she repeated.

"Wasn't there?" asked Carl.

"No!"

"All right, then, Carl, I think you'd better buzz off and not bother Myrtle any more," interrupted Will.

"I'll have to hear that from Myrtle."

"Well, Carl, perhaps it would be better if you did," she answered. "I'm sorry you made it so hard for me to tell you. I had thought better of you, Carl, than I do now, so goodbye!"

"Then I had better get the birthday present that I brought for you."

"Yes, do so. I had one birthday present that made me feel full of happiness already today."

"Okay! Well, bye, bye." He turned and walked to the house.

"Goodbye!"

"Myrtle, you are eighteen today. Did I guess right?"

"Yes, it is my birthday."

"Happy birthday, dear. Many returns of the day, Myrtle."

"Thanks, Will! Thank you so much!" said the girl.

"I didn't know I had a rival."

"There are always rivals, lurking on every road, Will."

"Not any more, dear," responded Will with warmth.

"No, Will, not any more."

Myrtle and her parents and Will had a game or two that evening. The young folk could not think of the game and the parents won both games. Then they made coffee.

"Mother and Dad. We'd like to tell you something at coffee now. Will loves me, and I love him. He gave me the best present of all."

"That is very nice," said her mother.

The father kissed his daughter and shook hands with Will saying, "I hope you will both be happy."

"Thank you. We shall be happy!" replied Will.

And Myrtle's mother seemed happy, just as happy.

Myrtle's mother held a hand of her doughter and one of Will's, and said, "I know you two people must be very happy. Dad and I will wash the coffee cups tonight, and let you say goodnight."

"Thank you!" said Will. "Thank you, mother," said Myrtle.

"To think I never asked your birthday. And I had no present."

"O, yes you did, you gave me your love."

"Wasn't that a trade?"

"No, I gave you mine before. It was the best birthday present of all that I received today."

"I thought you were nineteen at least."

"Why, did I seem grown up?"

"Perhaps. But so fresh and young and beautiful and lovable."

"Such tribute deserves some recognition."

And it was the daintiest kiss she had ever given that she now bestowed upon her lover. But no wonder he paid tribute to her. Will did not hurry away tonight and Myrtle was glad, no doubt. They held hands and sat close to each other a long time.

"Goodnight, son and daughter," said the mother finally.

"Goodnight, Will and Myrtle," offered the father.

With a kiss Myrtle bade her mother and father goodnight.

And so did Will; that is, he kissed Myrtle's mother.

The father kissed Myrtle and shook Will's hand.

"When, Will?" asked Myrtle, after the parents had retired.

"Not till spring or next summer. I'll have to build a house this winter."

"I'll be ready and glad when you are." At this he kissed her.

"Of course, we could live here a little while," she added.

They sat quietly together a little while longer.

"I'll get a house built for us as soon as I can do so, Myrtle," he said in parting.

Country school—children at play.

SCHOOLHOUSE FOR EIGHT

Herman Sears was happy the next week when he was able to bring the good news to his wife that a schoolhouse was to be built as soon as it was possible for the eight children who were ready to be enrolled.

"Just to think, Jo, you will be one of the first pupils in the new school that is to be built soon!"

"Better than this, Nellie, Mr. McCrea will begin to teach the children at home until the school building is ready."

"Won't that be fine, Jo?" urged her mother. "Practise some writing, Jo."

"I don't know. I'd like a bigger blackboard to write upon."

"I am sure it will only be for a month or two."

"Then, Jo, the school will be ready," cheered Nellie.

"We will start to build it as soon as possible."

"It need not be very big. Eight children are not so many."

"Yes, Nellie, it must be a certain size. Of course, soon there will be more than eight children there as the settlement grows larger."

"Well, Herman, it is a good start. I thought I would have to teach Jo for another year."

"It will be painted white. I don't know why they call a country school a little red school house."

"Primary children like red."

"That is not a good reason, Nellie."

"I must get some clothes ready to send Jo to school."

"And I'll need some books, Daddy, won't I?"

"I suppose you'll need books and clothes and a lunch."

"That's right, they can barely come home to lunch."

"And I'll need pencils and pens and note books."

"That's right, Jo, you make a list and maybe Daddy can get what you need."

"Aren't we lucky to get a school built so soon as this in this new homestead country, Herman?"

"We wouldn't if we had not asked for it."

"And the fact that we had a teacher living here is fine."

"That does not matter so much," replied Herman.

"Jo, you should get busy every day and do some lessons."

"I won't be a beginner, Mamma, will I?"

"I hope not."

"I'll get my reader now and read to you."

"Fine, you read while I get our meal ready for us."

"Won't we have some good news for Uncle Will when he comes home again?" suggested Josephine. "A school and a teacher."

"Yes, Jo, but why should he be interested?"

"Well, he is to be a school 'tustee', whatever that is, Daddy said. And Uncle Will wants a school too."

"Trustee, Jo! Trustee!"

"That's what I said, 'tustee'."

"When you get a new tooth in place of that one that came out, you can say it better. Trustee!"

"Where shall I begin to read now, Mamma?"

"Why, where you left off."

"I think I'll read the last page over to get warmed up."

"All right, warm up close to the stove here on the last page."

"I don't need the stove to warm me up."

"I know, but I can hear you better close beside me."

That week passed quickly, planning for school and practising lessons. Jo had a jolly time in anticipation of the big event, her very first day at a real new school.

Meanwhile, just a few miles across the bush another one was having a busy time planning another big event.

That Friday night when Will came home from the railway, he had something to tell the folks. Josephine did too. He jumped from the pony and rushed into the log house.

"What do you think? Nellie, Herman, Jo?"

"We are having school," interrupted Jo.

"Yes, I know, Jo," Will said, noting her book.

"And we are to have a new school building, and we have to go to Mr. McCrea's house until the school is ready," insisted Jo.

"Is that so? I have something to tell you folks."

"I'll bet it is, I must hurry, I'm going to ride across

the bush to Myrtle's," said Jo, almost jealous of him spending so much time over there.

"O Jo, don't you like Myrtle? I do. And she said she would like to come and live with me."

"Maybe that would be better, you could stay here then," agreed the little child.

"You are trying to tell us, Will," said Nellie, "that I am to have a sister-in-law, and that you are to marry Myrtle?"

"Yes, I was trying. But Jo, with her new school has the floor, I think. The other can wait till I get a house ready."

"We lived in a tent three weeks," offered Jo.

Her father laughed. "So Jo, you think Will wants to live in a tent, for three whole weeks."

"We had to when we had no house ready here at our homestead."

"That's an idea, Jo. Thanks! I'll tell Myrtle, and see if she likes living in a tent. But what I shall tell you is, I am going fishing with Pete at the lake and perhaps I can bring something from Pete's store, if Mamma needs it."

"Thanks, Will! Here is a list, if you can bring any of it from Pete's when you come back, Will, and congratulations on that interrupted news of your's and Myrtle's."

"Sorry I interrupted your lesson, Jo."

"That's all right, Uncle Will," said Jo. "Has Pete any gum at the store?"

"Good luck in the fishing, Will," said Herman.

"I'm sorry I interrupted your good news, Uncle Will."

"That's all right, Jo; I hope I may be able to bring a fish to you if I'm lucky enough to catch any."

With a smile and a laugh and a little pat on Jo's head, Will slipped out the doorway and mounted to his saddle. He wasted no time to reach Pete's place, and the two rode to Lake Majeau together.

"Myrtle and some of the girl friends of Rose are holding a shower for her at her house," said Pete.

"Then Myrtle rode to her house this afternoon, did she?"

"Yes, she did early this afternoon."

"We had better let them know we are at the lake fishing."

"Yes, we'll tell them before we put in a line."

At the lake Pete and Will let them know at the house they were fishing. Then they took a boat and trolled a line from it as they rowed. Pete also put a line in over the side. Will held the line behind the boat. Presently he felt a hard pull and began to draw in the line. Pete felt a tug on his line and rod which he had set between his knees. Both men nearer drew to their prize. It was a moment of great suspense. Both reeled in the line and Pete's fish landed safely at his feet in the boat. "Better give me a hand to land this one; it's a big one."

Pete brought his landing net and together they drew out a large one. "This one must be the grand daddy of the lake!"

"It will go fifteen or twenty pounds at least, Will!"

The men put in their lines again and soon again drew in a small one each. They tried once more and were rewarded before too long with a fair sized fish each again. Quite satisfied with their luck and their efforts, they decided to call it enough. They had thrills to do them for one fishing trip.

'Better give that big fellow to Majeau's for chicken feed."

"He's too heavy to carry home, for me at least," said Will.

"Here, take one of mine to Myrtles folk, Will."

"Thanks, I promised my sister one of mine."

"One is all I care to eat at one time, Will."

"One is really a meal for a family, Pete."

When they came to the house for coffee a little later, some of the girls had gone home. Soon Myrtle and Will were ready to depart for home; Will weighted down with three fair sized fish tied to his saddle pack.

"You had very good luck fishing, Will," said Rose as he was leaving. "Thank you, Myrtle, for helping at my party."

"You are welcome."

"Don't be surprised to see some of us over your way, Myrtle."

"Goodbye, Rose and Pete," called Will.

"Goodnight!" called Rose and Pete as they left. "Goodnight!"

"I'll leave your folks a fish when we get to your place."

"That will be a treat to Dad and Mom, Will."

"Will it?"

"Oh, yes! Dad has not been fishing for a long time."

"Myrtle, I'm so sorry I didn't have a present for your birthday."

"Forget it, Will. I'll have other birthdays again, I hope. My Dad likes to build houses, Will. I'll bet he would like to help us hew and flatten the logs for a house this winter."

"O, would he? I'll talk to him about it the next time I'm over to see you, Myrtle, if you like."

"Of course, I'd like you to do so. And I'm sure Dad would be delighted to help do it or any other work for us."

"We have two extra rooms now. You could cut the pine or spruce logs and draw them in and while you and Dad hew logs I can cook fish for our dinner or supper."

"How nice you have planned it. So you would like to cook some fish dinners for us this winter."

"I'd love to do so, Will, love to."

"You fine little woman! I'm glad I found you at Pete's store."

"Will you be over on Sunday?"

"Not this Sunday, Myrtle, but the week later I'll come and go to church with you," said Will. "I think I'll quit the railway job."

"You must be tired of feeding forty men or more there."

"Yes, a month of it is almost enough for anyone."

When they reached her home, Will opened his pack of fish and got out a nice, big, beautiful pickerel. "Will you folks be able to scale this fish tomorrow, Myrtle?"

"O' yes, Will, and thanks." He cut with a jack-knife a twig from a willow and hooked a little, sharp barb in a gill of the pickerel so she could carry it easily.

Dan, Will's pony, nudged her hand with his nose, and she turned to pat his nose a bit. She did not lavish an arm around the pony's neck as she had done many times, but stood there a moment. Will saw them and said, "I wish I had my camera here!"

"But Will, you don't need a camera. You have us both, Dan and me too!" That was straight truth, not to be contradicted.

"O, have I! So I have!" And he folded his sweet, bush homestead girl in his arms, right there at Dan's nose in her home gateway. And the girl clung to him, making it feel he had a partner to really hold and love! He looked at Dan over her shoulder and smiled and he kissed the girl fondly. "Dan doesn't mind. He doesn't act a bit jealous."

"Doesn't he?" she asked. "I'm glad he is not."

"Goodnight, Myrtle."

"Goodnight, Will." At last he let her go. Still she held him.

"I must get along. I have a job to work at for a whole week more, and then I'll come in time to go to church again with you."

"How nice it will be to have you go with us again," she said joyously.

And so they parted. Will rushed through the poplar and pine bush on the old Lac La Nonne trail to the new homestead, and there left a second big fish for his sister, Nellie, and Herman and Jo. He took the third one to his cook car on the railway gang to prove to some of his friends that he had had some luck fishing. At Pembina Creek he he did not forget to leave Nellie's groceries he had for her and for which she thanked him.

"See the deer I shot, Will," said Herman. It was attacked by a wildcat and scratched badly."

"Good venison!" complimented Will.

The following Sunday Will finished working at the railway and came home on his pony, Dan, to stay, he hoped. But that morning he did not stop to see Jo and Nellie, his sister, at their log cabin. Instead he rode straight through the bush trail north to be in plenty of time to go with them to church on that side of the woods. Here Myrtle waited for him, dressed in a lovely, clean, light-coloured dress that made her look more beautiful than ever, if that were possible.

They sat in the back seat of the democrat again and rode to the church with her parents. They sang as they had sung previously and read from a book together and Mr. Reikie complimented them for their good help with the singing. And when they had driven home, a good dinner was ready in the oven for them.

"Thank you for the big fish, Will. It was good."

"Yes. Thanks for the pickerel. It made us all two meals."

"I'm glad you liked it and that it was big enough for two meals," replied Will.

"I told Dad that maybe he could help you hew some logs this winter. And he said he would be glad to give you a hand."

"Thanks, Myrtle! But thank your Dad too!"

There were some games after the meal and Will enjoyed them with her parents and with Myrtle.

"Good-bye, my little bush homesteader girl," said Will, as he was ready to go later.

"I can't say that handle you have found for me helps to describe me at all well. Just call me your girl," said she.

"All right, my girl! And I'll be your beau!"

That week back at the farm seemed wonderful to Will. He found so much he wanted to do. He planned where he would build his house and his barn and his garden and other things. He started some of these places and even plowed a bit near the creek on the north hillside as had Herman for next year's garden. There were many things he had discussed with Herman and Nellie and when evening came each

day, Jo was home from school to tell them all about her new classes at school. She was to be in grade two, so she told them. She was so happy to be able to go to this new school and play and work with the seven other children that were there. It was fun for the others to hear her tell about it.

The new school building, one half mile west of Tom Price's was commenced already and the builder had made a good start on it. Soon there would be a school for the eight school children with a roof on it. With nice weather by Saturday the roof would protect it from rain.

"So you have been at school a whole week now, Jo."

"A week and a day," she corrected. "It is not far to walk."

"You like Mr. McCrea, who teaches you?"

"Yes, but we have to work hard and learn to spell and read and do sums and many things."

"I'm glad he keeps you all busy."

"That he does!" And Jo really thought she had to work.

Friday night came and so did a rain pour out of the clouds that night. Josephine had just reached home when it began.

"Mamma, the roof is about finished on our little schoolhouse."

"That's good or it might get wet tonight, Jo," was the reply.

It rained all night and was still raining hard Saturday morning. The Pembina Creek had risen three feet and was still rising. It was a three day rain and Sunday morning the water was up to the tops of the willows along the creek. A corduroy bridge the homesteaders had driven over less than two months before was all gone. The poles had floated away down the stream. Will and Herman had a swim in the creek and began to worry about what Josephine would do to get to school. The sun barely shone at all on Sunday.

Just past noon time there was a great commotion down where the bridge had been on the Lac Ste. Anne - Lac la Nonne Trail. Herman and Will went outside to see what it was. There a whole tribe, it seemed, of Indians had arrived with travois and wagons and horses and children and wigwams and dogs and what barking and chattering and

noise! There was no crossing and the creek was hourly still rising. A few poles were being collected by some of the men to make a raft, on which to make a crossing of the swollen stream. Some of the men and boys were in swimming. It looked as if they would never make a crossing that night. But there was a great bustle at the bridge site. One man fell off the first light raft they made, and got wet, clothes and all. The raft came apart in midstream and had to be remade. A wagon fell into the water from the raft and the swimmers had to pull it out. One pony swam the stream pulling the travois, supported by a log, which was lashed under the trailing poles of the travois. It went just fine and made many more trips. When the light raft was mended a new effort was made to float the vehicles across on it. Dogs, horses, wagons and meat from their hunting, and fish from their fishing went over, faster than one would think. A squaw and child came to the homesteaders' home, asking for milk, butter, eggs. The Indian woman could speak but a few words in English and Nellie could barely understand what she wanted.

"Fish! Meat!" she thought she said. Then, "Bread, milk! Eggs! Flour!" The words were hard to get. "Butt."

Nellie gave the squaw a pail of milk, a half loaf of bread, a chunk of home-made butter, four eggs. "It is all I have!" Nellie said, as she handed the things to the woman.

The squaw bowed her thanks and mumbled something in Cree. Nellie thought she was dissatisfied and became a bit worried, as the squaw stood there eyeing her and Jo a few moments longer. She did not seem to be in a hurry to go. She pointed to a ribbon in Jo's hair, then pointed to the child, perhaps a grandchild, mumbling in Cree again.

Nellie produced a short piece of ribbon like Jo's hair ribbon and handed it to the squaw who smiled appreciatively.

She then handed a bag she had hidden under her blanket to Nellie, which had a fish and a piece of venison in it. Evidently, she had been bargaining for all she could get in the trade. If she had stayed longer perhaps she would have seen other things that she liked. But now she turned and bowed and bowed her thanks again as she left.

Meanwhile the men at the creek saw the Indians ferry

nearly the last of their things across the Pembina Creek's swollen waters. The squaw and child happily crossed on the raft with the last few things, and Will and Herman decided that they might try a ride on their raft at the end of it all.

The Indians cheered as the white men made the trip successfully. Herman and Will were surprised to be cheered, but were further surprised that the Indians had made a fire on the other side of the creek and had set up most of their wigwams to camp for the night.

When Nellie and Herman had milked the cow that evening they took another pail of milk to the Indians, encamped on the south side of the swirling waters, where they were drying wet clothes and blankets over a campfire. Their chief thanked the new settlers for this gift. Nellie took Jo with them to see the Indians, most of whom were huddled in their tents or close to the fire. Autumn nights were quite cool after such an equinoctial storm as this had been. A few faces peeped out of the wigwam flaps or doorways. The several teepees were circled about their fire.

"That family must be pretty large, Mamma!" observed Jo, as they retraced their steps back to the north side of the creek.

"They must have some cousins and aunts and uncles with them," said Herman to his daughter.

"Yes, I counted eleven teepees there beside their campfire," continued Jo.

"They crossed that flooded creek faster than I expected," said Herman.

"They certainly did," agreed Will, who had gone along to watch that they made the crossing safely.

BRIDGING THE FLOOD

We must begin to think of getting Josephine to school across the creek, was the thought that entered most of their minds, and Will was the first to express his in words, "How about us building a foot bridge over the willow tops tomorrow, Herman?"

"That will be a task," he said.

"We could drive poles in the mud, put a few slabs or boards on top." Will was a bit dubious about the work himself. "Perhaps I could swim Dan across. Jo could ride him to school."

"Could I? That is nice of you to let me ride your pony."

"Would you like to?"

"Not across the creek," said Jo.

"You like to cross on the raft better?"

"Yes, Uncle Will, I do."

"Well, Jo, I think I do also."

"How, Will, do you think you could drive poles for a bridge above that swift moving stream now?"

"Maybe a raft, how else could you do it?"

"I don't know. You would have to have an anchor, the willows are covered with water too deep to tie to them."

"Quite true, we'll see tomorrow," said Will. "I'll let Jo use my Dan to ride to school if we can get them both across."

That night when Jo was ready for bed, she came and sat for a little while near Will, and listened to him and her father talking about what they would do the following day. She was really very interested in the proposed bridge building.

Every day there seemed some new interesting thing on this new bush homestead. She rather wished she could stay home and watch the bridge building, but every day there were new iteresting and intriguing things at school to do also. Finally her mother said it was bed time if she were to get up in time for school the following morning.

"I'll get up the minute you call me in the morning, Mamma!"

"Yes, I've heard that before, Jo."

"Goodnight, Daddy; goodnight, Uncle Will!"

The girl gave each one a fine hug and loving kiss. Then she gave her uncle an extra kiss, as if for good measure.

"Goodnight, Mamma!" and there were two kisses for her.

"Jo, why all this extra hugging and kissing tonight?" asked the child's mother.

"The exciting events of today are like a story book to the girl," remarked the father.

"Yes, I doubt if the girl sleeps at all," declared Will.

"I think anyone could find something to dream about tonight," commented Nellie.

The next morning everyone was up early, bright sunny day it was.

"I'll get Dan and saddle him while you milk the cow, Herman," said Will, whistling as he left the house. Dan knew his whistle and he also knew that Will often brought him a treat. So the pony whinnied. Then he came up the meadow to meet Will and he received a pat on his nose and a treat he had expected.

Josephine was dressed and ready for school before breakfast for this was a great event, her first horseback ride to school and to cross that Pembina Creek in any manner now a triumph. The level of the water, the men noted, was about the same as the night before. "Not much change in the water level," observed Herman as he came in with the milk for breakfast.

"No, it looks as if it were the same as last night."

"Did you notice the raft, Will?"

"It's right where we tied it, Herman. And the Indians are already pulling camp."

"On the move again, eh?" said Herman.

"Huh, I thought the squaw would be back for another trade," said Nellie. "They seemed glad to get what I had to give them."

"Probably would but she cleaned you out of even some finery, ribbons and butter," laughed Herman.

"I hope we can bridge that flood without falling in," said Will.

"You better put on your bathing trunks on to get Dan across, Will," advised Herman.

"You bet I shall. You be careful of that raft if you are taking Josephine across on it," cautioned Will.

"All aboard!" sang Will as he slipped off everything but his trunks after breakfast, and he untied Dan from the fence.

Herman came down to the raft with Jo, the child ready to go but with her hand in her father's.

"All right, Danny boy," and he gave his pony an encouraging pat, as he waded into the flooded stream. Dan swam finely and Will slipped off his back in mid-stream to make it lighter, and he held a hand on the saddle, thus being towed part way. So Dan and Will were standing on the bank waiting when Herman brought Jo across on the log raft.

"Perhaps I'd better go as far as Tom's to see that no other creek has gone on a rampage like this."

"Nice if you did, but I think your pony will follow the Indians, and some of them are just over the hill there a little way."

"I'll be back in a jiffy!" was Will's parting word.

"Away we go, Uncle Will," called Jo to her Daddy.

And Josephine climbed up into the saddle, Uncle Will moving back behind it. Then away they went, Will moving back into the saddle, as Jo was so slight there was room for two.

Then in less than a half hour Will came back over the hill and swam back across the creek to the house. "Made good time, and Jo went right along. She's a good bushman!"

"I'm glad of that, Will," answered Nellie.

"Shall we really build a bridge, Will?" asked Herman.

"It might be fun, and useful until the water lowers enough to put back a corduroy bridge."

"All right, I've a small raft ready. If we anchor it to the largest willows, perhaps we can build right over them."

So the high-level bridge was begun.

"I rustled up some poles to drive. You get the post-maul Herman," suggested Will.

Soon the construction was making rapid progress.

"I'll take the raft out and fasten it, Herman, and you build from shore to meet me, Herman."

"I've two poles driven in now, Will, and soon I'll have two more in. Then I'll pass the maul out to you."

Like a boat dock the bridge reached centre stream in a short time and then continued toward the other side. Before eleven o'clock the structure was finished. Will left one post high so that he could nail a hand rail along the top.

"Just for safety, this top rail help," he promised.

And sure enough, Jo walked alone on the bridge after school. But the pony Dan waded in and crossed the creek at the same time.

"The water has gone down two inches, Herman, since noon," said Will.

That evening Will slipped away on Dan through the bush on the old trail to Myrtle's. Dan seemed to know the road and whinnied at her gate. Myrtle knew his whinny and came from her home door quickly.

"What a rain we had, Will!" she exclaimed, and she hurried to his waiting arms.

He kissed her and held her a moment. "Myrtle, my precious love!"

"I'm so glad you came. You know, the jealous Carl Davies came around our house, shooting his shot gun last night and most scared us to death. He must drink and goes out on toots like this occasionally. Pete saw him and persuaded him to go on home. If we had phones, Mom would have phoned the police. He wanted me to come out and go for a ride."

"Of course, you did not go."

"Who would, when a crazy loon like that shoots his shot gun at your doorway?"

"Troublemaker. Did he ever give you trouble before?"

"No, I think he is a bit off, or just a bit jealous."

"I'd like to tangle with him, and not with guns."

"He would never fight one fair. A coward is one that makes such disturbance," said Myrtle.

"Pete told him off, did he?"

"I think so, he told him not to mix liquor and firearms."

"Then he went home, did he?"

"Yes, I think so, and I hope he never calls this way again."

"Perhaps the police should be notified. No one wants a loony, who boozes up, hanging around with a gun."

"It might make him worse." Myrtle put her arms around Will's neck and clung to him. "I'm afraid, Will."

"Don't be afraid, dear. You have done no wrong."

"Why can people as young as that Carl get liquor?"

"Someone gave him a drink of homebrew." He comforted her. "Don't worry, Myrtle, dear girl."

They went into the house together; the girl trembled a bit.

"I thought I was grown up, Mom, Dad. I'm so glad Will came."

"So are we. We had a bad time here. It wasn't rain only."

"Your daughter told me about it," said Will.

"I wonder what we should do," asked Myrtle's father.

"I wish we did not have to think about it," added her mother.

"If you let me, I'll see what I can do about it."

He sat down close to Myrtle. She lay her head upon his shoulder and went to sleep in a little while. He held as a treasure for a bit, then lay her head upon the cushion on the couch. She continued to sleep.

"Poor dear, I think she could not sleep all night," he said to her parents. "I'll go over to Pete's and ask him what he would do about it. I'll be back soon; let her sleep!"

"Tell me what to do about that fellow, Davies, Pete," said Will as soon as he could get over to Pete's place.

"Well, I don't know. Kick him in the pants or turn him over to the police for disturbing, threatening."

"Thanks for what you did, whatever it was."

"I knew he had a drink for he wanted to give me one. He bought some shells for his shot gun here and then went over and shot three at Myrtle's door. I went over there and got him to let me have the gun. Then I sent him home without gun or shells. I told him never to come to my store for anything again. I told him I'd give his shells and gun to the police if he did."

"That ought to do for a while. But if he gets another spell with a little liquor he'll come back. He has a screw loose."

"I guess you're right, Will..

"I heard you have a saw to saw lumber, Pete."

"Yes, I have. Are you going to cut some logs this this winter?"

"Oh, yes, of course, I'll need some lumber this winter."

"Well, I'll be seeing you then, maybe."

"Not maybe, but for sure!"

When Will returned to Myrtle's place, she was still sleeping. He let her sleep, and played dominoes with her father. "She's tired."

"She's scared, and I don't believe she slept at all," said her mother. "Not all night! She kept coming in to us."

"Maybe you could stay and make her feel secure with you here," said her father.

"We have a spare room, you know," said her mother. "Please do!"

"I shall! Yes, I shall do anything I can to help!"

Myrtle cried in her slumber a bit. Will sat beside her and said, "It's all right; things will be all right, Myrtle." He patted her hand and she clasped his and held it tightly.

"I think none of you got any sleep. You go to bed," Will told her parents. Myrtle still held his hand. "I'll stay, and I'll look after Myrtle. She needs me. I'll stay."

"Thank you!" "Thank you so much," they both said.

"Goodnight. I love her so much. I'll not scare her."

The parents went to bed, and a litte while later Will felt happy, for she wakened and looked at him and smiled. He still held her hand, and she clung to his.

"Sweetheart, I'll stay with you and you'll always be happy!"

"Thank you so much!"

Will held her and she was relieved. He kissed two wet tears away from her cheeks. "I'll stay with you if you want me to do so," he whispered.

"Oh, Will, how I wish you would!"

"I will!" She kissed him and she felt secure. "I will!" he repeated.

"How happy you make me," she whispered.

"You make me happy too," he declared. Do you want me to help you to bed?" he asked.

"No just hold me," and she lay her head against his shoulder.

Both were so happy to have found each other. Finally she said, "I'll sleep tonight if you stay to watch the house with me."

"Let me help you to your room; please show me mine."

"Just opposite to mine. You take the lamp, I do not need it."

He helped her to her door, kissed her goodnight. "You have a nice, sound sleep now, my girl. We'll talk some more tomorrow."

"Thank you. Goodnight."

Oxen and sleigh of logs

Will checked the door before retiring and blew out the light. Everyone got some much needed rest that night in the home on the east edge of the woods. When they all appeared for breakfast there were smiles of happiness and joy on their faces, showing that God had given them restful sleep to renew their strength.

"I must get out this fall and clear some land and do some plowing. I want to get some crop in next spring, of course."

"I hope you may come back often and stay here over night if you can, every night if you wish," said Myrtle.

"I do too," added her mother.

"You be a brave girl now, Myrtle, and God and I will take care of you. Put your trust in God," advised Will.

"I know we have Him always for our guardian," said Myrtle.

After breakfast Will rode over to his homestead, first promising to come back soon. He brought Nellie some things again from Pete's store.

That day Will worked long on his farm making much headway with the clearing. He was back at Pembina Creek that morning in time for Jo to ride his pony to school again, and she was very tickled to see him, of course.

"Do you want to ride Dan to school, Jo?" he asked.

"Oh, may I?" she begged. "I'd love to have Dan to ride."

So away she went again after they got Dan over the still swollen stream. The Pembina water level lowered another two or three inches today and seemed less of a torrent than on Monday.

That night Will went through the woods to Myrtle. She was glad to see him again, naturally, and so pleased to have his company for a few hours. He was tired so retired early.

Herman had cleared some land that fall, too, and was plowing a field with oxen. There were not too many stones but it was hard work for man and beast. After a week or ten days clearing, Will tried plowing with the oxen. They

were slow and strong and turned the virgin sod nicely. It was a pleasant, pretty sight to Will to see the furrows rolling from the coulter of the plow, and being turned by the mould-board. Myrtle thought she would like to see the furrows turn where Will was breaking, so she came along with him one day. She rode her pony and she enjoyed the day visiting with his sister, Nellie. Will enjoyed telling where he planned to build the house and barn that day.

Snow came late that fall so the homesteaders got quite a bit of work done on the land. Pete had started to cut logs early that fall to saw in his sawmill. Being busy with his store too, he made a deal with Will that winter.

"I like cutting in fall early when the snow is not too deep. If one fells the trees now he does not get wet with snow, Will."

"You ought to know, Pete. You have expereince," answered Will one day, as he chatted with his frined in his little store.

"I always leave the ends of the logs up so a skidder can get a chain around the log. And logs are getting scarcer every year in our small woods."

"So you get an early start before someone else cuts them."

"That's right. If someone hears you cutting, they 'mooch in' on you if they can."

"You have to get a permit to cut lumber, I mean trees, don't you?"

"Oh, yes, that's what is called 'stumpage' and it's cheap."

"How much a thousand feet does it cost for sawing at mill?"

"Five dollars. Tell you what, I'll make you a deal."

"What deal, Pete?"

"I've got close to a hundred thousand feet cut in logs, some of the best pine left in the bush here. You haul it in to my sawmill and we'll split 50-50. You help me put it through the mill and it won't cost you anything. I've the permits for the stumpage paid."

"That sounds like a good deal, Pete, fair enough. I'll do it."

"Fine! I cannot get away from the store too long. But I'll go out with you a couple mornings soon and we can skid

the logs up to piles or skidways before snow comes." And Will had work ahead hauling the logs with his team and then work again putting the logs through the sawmill. Will also found a few good long logs that he cut and helped Myrtle's father hew for house logs. So it was handy to the sawmill and handy to hewing to stay at her home. And she and her parents were so glad to have him, they made him feel right at home. Many nights when he came in from a hard day's work he would say to her a word or two.

"Aren't I lucky to have a girl and her mother to cook me supper? My, things smell good tonight."

"Aren't we lucky to have a good, hungry man to eat the food we have cooked for our meals?" she agreed, with a fondness and appreciation easy to see.

"Have you most of the logs hauled yet?" asked her father, one night when the snow lay white upon the ground the second time.

"More than a thousand, close to twelve hundred logs."

"That's quite a stack!"

"Yes, it is a sizeable pile of logs!"

The new homesteaders were very busy that first winter, getting out lumber and building logs for barns and houses. Winter was not a time of leisure on the homestead. Meanwhile Herman got out many logs to saw into lumber. And so did the many other people that continued to press into the new homestead country. Along the railway stores were being built and homes. When ballast was put on the track the next summer, the railway promised a daily train service. That would bring more homesteaders into the country surely. Everywhere there was bustle and work, but wages were very low. Men often had to work hard for a dollar a day.

There was not much recreation, sometimes a sing song at a home. But Will went to church with Myrtle and her parents now in their sleigh. And how nice it was they could visit with his sister, Nellie, and with Herman Sears across the bush trail. They sang old favorites and some hymns that everyone could sing. Even a few records on a tiny phonograph were a treat in those early days of the century in the pioneer north country of the Edmonton district.

One great event that winter was Pete's and Rose Majeau's wedding. And Myrtle was to be one of her brides-

maids! How lovely she looked when she dressed for the wedding, which was held away over at Lac la Nonne. Luckily Will saw her at home and told her how pretty she looked in her dress.

"O, Myrtle, how beautiful you look in that dress for the wedding! How lovely!" he said. "So sweet!"

"Makes one almost wish it was her wedding, Will," said her mother who was helping her dress that evening.

"Will could say the word and make it our wedding," the girl replied, and she smiled her prettiest into a mirror.

"But your mamma and daddy aren't going so far to a wedding. I haven't even a cake ready for Sunday, let alone a wedding. You'll just have to wait a little longer, I think."

"May I kiss the bridesmaid?" asked Will. He did not wait for an answer, but kissed her at once. "Just a few more months, Myrtle dear, and it will be our wedding. I hope I have a roof on a cabin by then."

Her father was there in the room, "Me too!" he said and he kissed her. "My sweet young daughter!" There was a tear in his eye. More than one daughter had made parents shed tears at a wedding.

Will took Myrtle to Pete's wedding, though he had no new suit to wear. Money was always scarce. "I feel very shabby along with you," he said, as they set out. "I should have a new suit."

"Your suit is all right. If you had a new suit, no one would see the bride's or bridesmaids' dresses!" she told him.

They drove a cutter to Pete's and Rose's wedding and it was a long, cold drive. But they had blankets around their feet, their feet and hands were warm, so were their hearts. It was a lovely wedding and they had a very good time, an exceptionally jolly, musical reception afterward. And the drive home was a pleasant trip. Luckily there was no disturbance and no Carl Davies there to bother them.

"It is certainly too bad that I did not get you a ring to wear by this time, so that you could have had it on at this wedding. Myrtle, I'm so sorry."

"Listen, we are poor homesteaders! How many new homesteaders can get to a town or the city to buy things on these roads. In the summer we ride horseback on our bush trails. No one here has one of the horseless carriages or

Stanley steamers I read about in a newspaper or magazine or somewhere not so long ago."

"Well, the best stone I turned over in the plowing last fall was one that looked like an Indian tomahawk. No one would give fifty cents for it."

"Will, I'm not going to marry you for your money. You are not marrying me for mine, are you?"

"No!"

"Well, quit worrying about the ring that will be nice any time."

"I've got to get you that ring now."

"Will, feel my left hand with the glove on it."

"You have a ring on it. Why! Where did you get that?"

"I borrowed it from Mom."

"Does she know you have it?"

"Yes, certainly she knows. She has two. Once she thought she had lost the ring dad gave her. After a long while he bought her another one. Then after a long time again she found the first one. Since then she has had two."

"Say, Myrtle, I wonder if your mother or your father would consent to sell me the extra ring."

"I don't know. I certainly don't know. You could ask. There's no harm in asking."

"Well, you are not going to have to borrow it any more."

"Don't tell them that I asked you to speak to them."

"I won't. But I'd like to, if you don't mind and think they won't mind."

"Oh, I didn't show it to anyone. I did not want to worry you. But it felt good on my finger even in a glove. I know I had no right to wear it unless you put it on my finger, Will. Let's not quarrel about it. The ring is not so important. I love you and you love me. That's the important thing. Isn't it?"

"Myrtle, it is my fault. I should have one for you now. I never thought I had enough to get you a nice ring yet."

When Will asked Myrtle's father and mother the next evening about the purchase of the extra ring, they were pleased to sell it, as it was unnecessary to them, and at a reasonable price, for it was really now quite an old relic or souvenir they were glad to sell it if were of any use to

another. So Will bought the ring and what joy it was to Myrtle when he asked her to let him put it on her finger.

Her mother brought up from the cellar a jar of her precious cranberry wine with which to celebrate the event.

She said, "We must all celebrate this event with a glass of our very good cranberry wine." And she poured out a small glass for the three of them.

Now the bush homestead girl had a ring on her finger. "Last night it was the bridesmaid, now it is the bride I may kiss." And he kissed her dainty, waiting lips.

The evening following this incident Myrtle's father came in with a worried look on his face.

"Someone or something has been trying to steal our meat. You can see tracks of a man around our gate where I have a piece of meat hanging from our gate post."

"You don't think that Carl Davies is back around here?" asked Myrtle excitedly.

"Now do not get all worked up about it," said her mother.

"Not likely after the send off Pete must have given him."

"But Dad, who else could it be?"

"Myrtle, the only thing that fellow could smell, I'll bet comes from a bottle," declared her father.

"Could it possibly be a bear who forgot to go to sleep for the winter?" questioned Will who had come in and heard part of this discussion, while washing up.

"Might be, though not likely," said the father.

"Certainly glad you are here, so Myrtle and I don't get any fits again," said the mother.

"Have you a gun, a rifle? I never used one," stated Will.

"Yes, I have. It is a long time since anyone used it."

"Let's see it."

Will examined the gun carefully. "You have bullets for it?"

He tried a cartridge in it. "We'll be prepared. Perhaps our visitor will call again." He stood it in a corner carefully.

That night about nine a very peculiar noise was heard outside, which resembled a squeaky wheel or a hoop turning upon an ungreased axle. Two pair of eyes peeped from the edge of a window shade toward the front gate. There was something in the gateway, standing there! It resembled a

man in an overcoat! But did it exactly? The noise continued, an odd grating sound at times. — Then it ceased! — Now it began again! — The moon broke through a cloud, and between the pines in the yard, it showed the outdoors more plainly. Of all things, now framed in the moonlight of the night, a huge dark animal stood on his hind legs at the gate post, where suspended at a height of nearly twelve feet from a rope on a pole, a bag of meat hung. Mmmmmmm!!!!

"What is it? What is it, Dad, Will?" asked Myrtle.

The silence was at last broken.

"It's a huge bear, a big black fellow," whispered Will.

The noise continued. The bear was spinning a board around which was fastened by a spike to the top of a post, but it was loose and spun easily. Will drew on a coat; he picked up the gun.

"I'll get on top of the roof from that fence back of the house," he whispered. He pulled on some rubber boots. And now very quietly he slipped out of a back entrance.

Moments passed and slowly turned into minutes. People in the house waited with somewhat bated breath. The noise outside stopped! That was still worse for those in the house!

"He's coming this way toward the house!" cried father from the edge of the window. "He stopped!"

Myrtle slipped to the window shade to see out. Just a fraction of a second the bear raised up again on his hind haunches.

Then bang! "Bang! Bang!" The gun spoke from the roof twice and the marauder collapsed beside the gate near the front door. Will rushed into the kitchen and quickly found a sharp-pointed knife. With the gun in hand he opened the front door.

"Grrrrr!" There was an ugly, muffled, horrid sound.

The homesteader stepped out into the moonlight and approached the mass near the gate. He set his gun down at the gate. Cautiously he approached. The bear did not rise! The man bent over the animal a moment. Two seconds! Three!

"Whooooo!" a distant sound in the woods of a coyote or other animal broke the silence, "Wooo!! Wo!!"

Will quickly grasped his gun. He turned with knife.

Then all was quiet.

Will began, inexperienced as he was, to skin the bear.

The father shortly found his coat and hat and a couple of sharp knives and came out to help. It was a huge task. When finished they dragged the carcass into a shed on the skin, which really was more than a two-man job.

When they had washed up, they sat down in the house to rest.

"A bush homestead can be more exciting than the city!" admitted Will, after quite a long silence.

"Yes, I agree it can be at times!" agreed the father.

Myrtle and her mother had made some coffee, which they brought in now. And when they had done so, they sat quietly beside the men.

BLESS THE FISHES

The winter work seemed to successfully draw to a close. There was always more than could be done. When Will and Myrtle's father got the tremendous carcass of the bear cut up, they took a large piece of it over to Pete the next day. Another couple of large pieces they took up the bush trail to Herman and Nellie and Josephine.

Soon it was spring and warm weather invaded the north.

"When shall we go fishing again?" asked Pete one day.

"The lake won't be thawed for a month," responded Will.

"They say the fish are coming up the creeks already, even with some ice and snow in the creeks."

"It seems a cold job."

"Let's ride down to the lake with a couple of pitchforks."

"Pitchforks!"

"Yeah! Fish with forks!"

Will and Pete did just that! And they came home with two big sacks full of fish! Then everyone had a job again! It was a scaling of fish bee!

"Don't remember ever having so much fun as fishing with pitchforks with you, Pete," admitted Will.

Pete nailed a fish tail to a board to scale it.

"The same here, Will," said Pete in parting.

"What a feast!" declared Rose, Pete's wife. "You have brought me a job of work again. And a meal to cook!"

"Will is saving our meat; he has a sack full of fish!" declared Myrtle, and her mother and father prepared to help with the fun and exciting work too.

But that was not the end of the fishing. The Norquists and Herman Sears were fishing and bringing home sacks and sacks of fish and they were making barrels of pickled fish. They salted some in boxes. Will and Pete went fishing again too. "Food for chickens and humans!" they said, and sometimes laughed as they filled their larders. They feasted on fish all through Lent and long afterward.

Soon, perhaps too soon, they must get back to the earth, make garden and sow seeds. Will planted a little grain, his first crop. He got some lumber hauled through the bush for a house and barn and so did Herman. He had more than he needed and so had Will, so they sold a little to some new neighbors. Three neighbors moved right into the bush to live and were cutting trees all summer, slashing down huge piles of poplars.

"That will make a terrific fire if they start a bonfire!" declared Herman, when he and Will saw it one day.

"What do you think, Uncle Will, our cow had a baby calf this morning!" informed Jo. "Now, mamma says we shall have plenty of fresh milk again."

"That will be better than canned milk, won't it?"

"Much better, and all we need. Daddy said he might buy a new cow. Then you can have yours back when you want her."

"Let's see! Where is your daddy? Tell him I want to build a house and I'm going to cut a little hay as soon as the house is up and then I'm going to get married."

"What, all in one day or week!"

"No! Not in one day or weekend or week!"

"It sounds as if you had more to do than Mr. McCrea, our school teacher."

"Probably I have, and I have not eight school children to help me do it."

"Maybe I can help you some."

"Yes, you can, Jo! You bring me some lunch, any time you think I'm hungry. You are very nice to want to help!"

"Oh, that's good, I can do that easily!"

Will continued to ride over to Myrtle's. Bringing the bear meat and fish and an occasional rabbit from his snarwire made him a welcome provider at either place. Early that spring Herman had shot a deer so the homesteaders were quite fortunate.

"Bush homesteading is not too bad," confided Herman, when they were setting up the logs of Will's house. "These flat logs make a nice wall, a very nice dwelling."

"Myrtle's Dad is coming over to help dovetail the corners of the logs," Will said, as they got the floor beams laid. "I must dig out a little cellar now!"

With three men working at it the structure went up quickly. Log by log it grew and soon he needed floors and shingles.

"Pete promised to bring shingles and floor from Onoway for me."

"Did he? That's good. I have a bundle and a half that you may have to start on," Herman told him.

Cutting hay.

"Did you get my shingles?" asked Will.

"Yes," said Pete. "And I'll bring those windows and the flooring when I go down next week."

"So the roof of the boards cut at Pete's sawmill and the new cedar shingles went on that week, very easily," said Will, one evening. "Pete lent me a two-wheeled Red River cart to haul the shingles, flooring, doors and windows through bush trail."

"Did he?" asked Myrtle. "May I ride over to visit Nellie and see the house next week when you have the door and windows?"

"Would you like to?"

"Nothing I would like better!"

So Myrtle came and two more hammers went to work in the house that day. Nellie came over and with Myrtle there was a busy bee that day. They proved they could build too. They lined the house with building paper while three men put in doors, windows and chinked and plastered the walls outside.

"Now I must get a stove and some stovepipe."

"Now you had better stop and eat supper, Will," said Nellie. "Come on over to the house and help us eat chicken and noodles!"

"Thanks! How's that baby calf, Jo?" asked Will.

"He is growing fast, very fast," said Jo, at her Mamma's side.

"What did you name it?" asked Myrtle.

"Bamby. Bamby!" said Jo.

They had all worked hard and Nellie's supper made the new homesteader builder feel right at home. She had a big pot of egg-noodles in chicken, and it tasted mighty fine.

What a happy sing-song they had that evening for a little while until they parted. They sang a little hymn as they said goodnight.

Grass was growing along Pembina Creek and rains were bringing along the gardens too. There was lots to do and a

wedding coming up. So Will and Herman started early to cut hay in the meadows along the winding Pembina. Seated upon the mower, Herman little expected to be tipped into the creek on a bump. But over he went and he got a foot wet. "That meadow can be as hazardous as the bush trail through the woods," said he.

But that was only a beginning!

At apparent good going, over he went again and the ox team ran down the meadow, actually ran! "What struck those blasted beasts?" He was soon to know. As the oxen ran they cut a swath in the hay like a streak of lightning. He drove carefully but he could not get the oxen in near to where he fell off last. There was a buzzing sound! "Oh, hornets! Whow!" He got stung.

"Hornets, eh?" agreed Will, who came over to learn what all this fracas was about. He had been raking hay on the other side of the creek. He soon learned as had Herman.

"Buzz, Buzz!"

Herman got stung again!

"I don't blame Tom and Charlie. That hurts."

"Perhaps we can smoke them out." Will tried. But the hornets still clung to the meadow. "Well, we can wait to cut this later and keep smudging the hornets."

"With a wedding coming up I think the groom is wise to stay out of this hay meadow or the bride will not be able to recognize him," laughed Herman. But the sting he had on his face swelled. "I wonder if Jo and Nell will think I have mumps."

"Let me see if I can pull the stinger out of your face."

Oxen in hay.

THE WEDDING

A pretty eighteen-year-old bride blushed as she looked into the mirror. Rose was there helping her to dress. Food was prepared for the past week. Her sisters were there helping her mother. And now the Minister had arrived and so had the groom.

What a lovely day for a wedding and for the bride! Pete was to be Will's best man. A sister was to be the bridesmaid.

Herman and Nellie and Jo came into the house. Josephine went to see the bride with Nellie. "Wish I had a dress like you, Myrtle," said the little girl.

"You will some day!" and she kissed Jo.

"How pretty you are and how nice you smell!" said Jo.

"Do you like my dress and the smell of perfume?"

"Yes, I do. I never smelled anything like that in flowers."

"Yes, I do. I'll have to say that soon," said Myrtle.

"So you will," said her sister and Rose. "So you will!"

And now the wedding was to begin soon and in a home on the east edge of the woods through which the Lac Ste. Anne trail wound its way to Lake Majeau and Lac la Nonne. A few invited guests crowded into the living room with the parents and relatives. Will was there with the minister. A soft wedding march commenced, some one playing a violin.

What a lovely bride emerged from a room beyond, with the strains of the music. Her father stepped slowly at her side. This was no Bush Homestead Girl today! A lovely bride in white wedding dress with a pretty bouquet of flowers. When Will saw her he thought they had forgotten nothing. And he thought too that she was prettier than any picture he had seen.

The soft tones of the violin ceased and the minister began the wedding ceremony. After the reading of the first part of the service, the minister turned to Will, "Wilt thou have this woman to be thy wedded wife, to live together after God's ordinance in the holy estate of Matrimony? Wilt thou love her, comfort her, honor, and keep her, in

sickness and in health; and forsaking all other, keep thee only unto her so long as both shall live?"*

"I will," Will made answer.

The minister continued the service. Soon he placed the woman's hand in the man's. And Will, holding Myrtle's right hand in his right hand said, "I William John Howard Lane take thee, Myrtle, to be my wedded wife . . ."

And the beautiful wedding service went on to the dignified and lovely end. Will then kissed Myrtle.

Now when the service was finished, relatives and friends came in turn to wish them well. Josephine enjoyed it all as much as anyone for she had held the bride's flowers through part of the service. She gave the flowers back to the pretty bride at last and smiled and kissed her.

Everyone sat down now and were served refreshments, during which the bride and groom cut the first cut into the huge, wonderful wedding cake, the artistic affair almost as pretty as the lovely daughter. The guests paid Myrtle's mother many compliments for the making of the bride's dress and cake that day.

So far everything went as planned. The bride was the recipient of both lovely gifts and kind wishes, as she had been at a girls' tea two weeks before at Rose's place.

Now there was to be a barn dance in Pete's new big barn, just down the road, giving them a little more room to move. So the bride had a chance to change her costume if she wished. There was music for the dancing, violin, accordion, etc. As the whole affair started at noon, it gave those who had far to come or go time to get home early if they chose, as some of the trails were still very rough or mere Indian paths like the Lac Ste. Anne trail through the bush.

When the many guests had gone from the house after the wedding, it gave the bride and groom a moment to themselves. They even evaded some of the relatives and everyone else to have a word to themselves. There was a nice spot in the garden where Myrtle's and her mother's flowers bloomed in every color.

"O, Will, my husband, I am so happy. Our wedding

* Excerpt is from Solemnization of Matrimony.

was so pretty and enjoyable." Her hands were holding his coat lapels.

Will patted her two white hands, which were bare now except for two rings which she wore. She was as beautiful as any queen! They looked into each others' eyes. He drew her to him. Now the wedding was over, they would take more time for each other instead of working long hours. Myrtle waited sweetly now for her kiss that she knew would be given. Then he kissed her pretty lips.

"Yes, I'm the happiest man in the world."

"And you have made me the happiest bride ever."

BARN DANCE AND PONY DAN

Pete Shone came over with his Red River cart to help Will move Myrtle's presents and things to their new home just three miles through the bush on the rough Indian trail.

Myrtle and Will came in from the garden when they heard the cart. Pete talked to Will when the bride had gone into the house. "Will, you don't need to tell Myrtle unless you wish, but I wanted to tell you to take a rifle when you go. So will I. I'll drive ahead in the cart and you can ride Dan."

"Why all this precaution, Pete?"

"Well, Herman and Nellie are going early too. But I'll drive just ahead of you. A friend told me he saw Carl Davies, and with a bottle as usual. He knows better than to let me see him around here. I don't think he will come into the barn dance. I asked a friend to watch for him and to let me know if he sees him. Then you'll have some protection through the woods. We'll load up now and you and Myrtle can dance once or twice and then we'll slip out and follow or go ahead of Herman and Nellie. We can put our rifles in with the trunks now. Let's bring out some trunks."

Together Will and Pete helped move the bride to her new home. They loaded trunks, presents and other things until there was barely room for the bride or her cabman. Then they took the bride to the barn dance. They bade the parents goodbye at the house. This was a strange honeymoon, a ride in a pioneer cart. Will tied Dan to the back of the cart and Pete set his watch dog to guard the cart.

Will and Myrtle and Pete and Rose all danced. Then they changed partners. But they then left together. Will told Myrtle Pete must be back early, so they would start on the trip through the bush now. Neighbors and friends were dancing, having a good time. Myrtle's Dad brought her pony to her, thinking she might rather ride the pony than to ride in the cart with the boxes and trunks.

"Thank you, Dad, and goodbye again." She kissed him fondly.

She quickly changed to riding clothes. Then she rode Bob beside Will, following close behind Pete, who drove the cart with the trunks and boxes.

However, they had barely gone a half mile, when suddenly a man stepped out of hiding in a clump of pine close to the trail and pointed a gun at Will.

Myrtle saw him first and yelled and pointed, "Will! Pete!"

Pete turned around at once.

Will sprang from his saddle.

But Pony Dan, seeing the man and gun at his head, was frightened and reared up on his hind legs and then came thundering down with his forefeet. One hoof struck the man's gun, which went off, making him drop the gun, and nearly bowling him over. He now came at Will with his fists. Will threw down his gun and for a second, fist for fist, they battled. But one good punch on his chin was all that was needed for Will to topple the fellow over. Down he crashed to the trail. Pete stepped between them.

"Well, Pete, I think this is Carl Davies, whom I met a year ago," and Pete picked up Carl's gun.

"I though so! Carl, I have two of your guns now. You had better run to get out of the country before the police get on your track," advised Pete Shone.

"I'll go; I'll not bother anyone again."

He started off down the road at a fast clip, while the others continued on their way to the new homestead.

"Pony Dan, I love you more than ever," praised Myrtle.

"I'll give you Dan for a wedding present," said Will.

"Dan is a particularly smart and good horse, Will; thanks!"

"I'll not forget how useful Dan was to us today, Myrtle."

"I can't help thinking he was a great service to us."

"Yes, Myrtle, my dear. He's a great pony!"

"Well, Will, if you are giving me Dan, I'll give you Robin."

"O Myrtle, thank you! But you shouldn't give Robin to me."

"Why not? I'd like you to have a wedding gift from me too."

"Thanks, Myrtle. Robin is a great pony also."

"And Will, our wedding was a very happy time for me."

"Everyone helped to make it so lovely. The bride was so beautiful and adorable."

"Little Jo, holding my flowers, was so cute and pretty!"

"Yes, and your mother made us such a lovely cake."

"Mom and Dad were both good to us. I'm so glad Dad brought me Robin to ride now through the rough bush trail."

THANKS FOR FLOWERS

By

William W. McKinley Parker

O God, I thank Thee for the sun,
The rain, the flowers, one by one,
The blue-eyed violet quite shy,
That hides along the river shore,
Great lilac blooms which spread so high,
Reflecting heaven's arc and more;

Thank God, O thanks, for buttercups,
And little meek johnny-jump-ups,
The phlox, moss-rose that faces sun,
Pink, white petunias, morning glory,
Find far and wide with color fun,
Each bloom tells me His wondrous story.

CHICKEN JAMBOREE AND A BUSH FIRE

Myrtle went out the next day with Will to see the wheat crop on his new breaking. The heads were plump already and gave great promise. At the edge of the tall woods of pine, birch and aspen the grain field spelt a story of civilization moving closer, as did the fingers of the railway branches reaching out west and north. And for added protection against fire, when Will had disced the field in the spring, he had made a few furrows around his cabin site.

Will asked, as they walked together, "Myrtle, did I ever tell you of the chicken jamboree we had on this field last spring?"

"No, Will. What ever is a jamboree of chickens?"

"A big crowd, a thousand or more assembled here. What a dance the prairie chickens had! They thought I had built a stage for their dance. They ran back and forth! And what a noise they made! There ought to be plenty of prairie chicken to eat this fall."

But this true story was cut short by news that Herman brought in from the railway town. "We are to have a new mail service on the C.N. soon! But news travels without letter," he said quickly.

"What is it, Herman? You have more to tell," asked Will.

"Yes, England and Canada have declared war on Germany!"

"Really, Herman! That is not such good news!"

"And someone has started a bush fire, quite a big one, just north." He pointed, "You can see the smoke rolling up black!"

"This news will spoil the fun of life throughout the country!"

Thick black smoke rolled across the land in a few hours. Many animals fled before the blaze.

"What started the fire to burn our good timber and firewood?"

"I do not know. But it is a good thing we both plowed

some land north of our buildings and around our homes!" observed Herman.

"I think we'll be fighting fire close at home for awhile," said Will. "Do you think we should plow some other furrows 'between us and the bush, Herman? Let's do it!"

"It might be a good idea, Will. It looks as if we may need some practice fighting, if there is to be some fighting overseas!"

"This is a gruesome outlook we suddenly are given!" said Myrtle.

Herman and Will acted promptly, and cautiously built more protection with plow against the menace of the big bush fire.

Meanwhile Nellie and Myrtle took pails and in an hour or less filled them with blueberries. Myrtle and Jo went out a little later and brought in another pail of berries each; so some fine desserts were in store that day for supper, and when the men came home they, though tired, were agreeably surprised by the fruit the women and Jo had garnered.

However, that evening a rain dampened things considerably saving much of the bush timber. The men were not surprised to have a fire warden ask them to turn out that night to help stop this fire a little later, although they had already worked all afternoon. They took with them canteens of coffee and water. Down the bush trail they met Pete Shone.

"Guess whom I found overcome with smoke on the road! Carl Davies! He won't start any more bush fires, I'll bet, fellows."

"Where is he?" asked the fire warden. "Where is he?"

"He's dead!" replied Pete. "Back a mile or so near my place. Caught by smoke of his own fire."

A few days later it was Myrtle's birthday, her nineteenth.

"Shall we go berrying on blueberry hill, Myrtle, to celebrate your birthday? I have a package on the hill as a surprise."

"By all means, let's go!" she agreed, but puzzling about the paskage on a hill, as she could not guess a birthday connection. "What package is on this hill to surprise me, Will?"

"I plowed part of that hill last fall, not all of it though."

They took their pails and set out for the berry patch, leaving a note on the door, "Gone berry picking on north hill."

Will's first crop of wheat was maturing rapidly upon this hill, the kernels forming well already. There were many large blueberries around the edge still, which filled their pails easily. At one place along the edge of the field was a trickle of oil flowing, promising some of Alberta's rich, black "flowing gold," underneath. "See our oil well here, Myrtle! Flowing Gold!"

At the end of the field where they picked blueberries last year Will had made letters, M & W out of stones from the first plowing. "This spot is a sacred shrine, where I rested my plow."

"This is where you gave me that blueberry kiss, isn't it?"

"Yes, but I'll kiss you first, then I'll eat the blueberry afterwards," laughed Will, kissing her fondly. "I love you so!"

And he did! That is, he ate a big blueberry now.

"Uncle Will and Aunt Myrtle!" A little girl, their niece Jo, called from the next hill toward home, "I have a surprise. Your mother and father are at the house to see you. And I have another surprise! My mamma baked you a cake, and I put the frosting on it!"

Will and Myrtle rushed down the hill to where Jo was.

Myrtle kissed Jo. "Thank you, Jo, for icing my cake,

and for all these surprises! Will has given me some birthday surprises too!"

Hands clasped, they all hurried down to the house.

"Surprise!" called the parents and Nellie when Myrtle reached her house. "Surprise! Surprise!"

She saw the cake on the table with nineteen candles on it. She kissed her parents and Nellie and Jo.

"Jo iced your cake and set the nineteen candles on it."

"Thanks, Jo, you're my Bush Homestead Girl." She kissed Jo again. "How did you get here, Mom and Dad?"

"We walked, on shanks-horses!" said her mother.

After greeting Myrtle's parents, Will kissed his Bush Homesteal Girl wife, and said, "Happy birthday, Myrtle."

They all added, "Happy birthday!" and "Happy birthday!"

"Thank you all." She beamed with joy. "You make me so happy!"

"We brought you a few things from the garden. It is just full of vegetables and flowers you planted in the spring, Myrtle."

"Thank you, my thoughtful mother and father."

THE END

(Any similarity of names of people in this part of Alberta is purely coincidental.)

A little later Jo had a baby sister.

SILVER FORKS
(1955)

Faculty of Education,
University of Alberta
July 26, 1955

Mr. Wm. W. Parker,
11223 - 76 Avenue,
Edmonton, Alberta.

Dear Mr. Parker:

I would like to congratulate you on producing such a fine story for young folks as "Silver Forks".

Best wishes for your continued success with your books.

John W. Gilles,
Director, University Summer Session

Faculty of Education,
University of Alberta

Dear Mr. Parker:

I enjoyed your story of the North Country, "Silver Forks". It "flows" along with interest sustained. I like the adventure episodes, the boat building and the ride to Peace River.

Sincerely,
Alberta Hastie

The new novel, "Silver Forks", by the writer, Wm. W. Parker, 11223 - 76 Ave., Edmonton, is a lively story of fur-farming, boating, hunting and sports, in which four young people grow up with many adventures in the Grande Prairie - Peace River country. Every young person will want to read about tussels with wild animals and other events in "Silver Forks".

Frank Steele, Editor the Herald.

Vancouver, B.C.

Dear Mr. Parker:

I have read your new book, "Silver Forks", with great interest. It is well written and I am proud of this exceptional novel for boys and girls and young folk.

Sincerely,
(Dr.) Donalda Dickie,
Author of the the Great Adventure